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*A Psychoanalytic Journal
for the Arts and Sciences*

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Imaginary Incest

by

A. Bronson Feldman

A Study of Shakespeare's Pericles

FOREWORD

The known facts about the man William Shakespeare of Stratford on Avon (1564-1616) have so far resisted every attempt to bring them into harmony with the spirit or psychology of the poems and dramas which have survived for three and a half centuries under his name. I have pointed out some of the reasons for this resistance in an article on Shakespeare-worship, published in *Psychoanalysis* (1953). The last attempt was made by the bold Frank Harris in two volumes of critical studies and a play. His play was hardly more imaginative than its companion books; they subjected the facts to a process comparable to dream-work and piled guess upon guess in a wonderful artistic way. Any information Harris could not fit into his structure, he simply left out. The result appears to have successfully warned most researchers against the daring to prove that a vital relation, a concord of motive and method, exists between the biography of Shakespeare, the merchant and moneylender, and the art of *The Merchant of Venice*, *King Lear*, etc. Other investigators have tried to solve the problem by abandoning the belief that the gentleman from Stratford was the real author of the works of art in question. The belief has been challenged since the middle of the seventeenth century but only by amateurs of learning and literary artists. Not until our own time did experts in the English classics arrive at the conviction that the name William Shakespeare was just a pen-name, chosen to mask the identity of a genius who was ashamed or afraid to let his true name be connected with these masterpieces. These experts strove to find the inspira-

tion for the plays and poems in the lives of several superior but mysterious men of the Shakespeare period. Of all the "claimants" to the glory of the world's leading dramatist, there is only one, it seems to me, whose interests and activities will account with reasonable completeness for the entire range of the Shakespeare energy. That one happens to be the only well-known poet of the group, Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford (1550-1604).

In the pursuance of my doctoral and postdoctoral studies in the theatre of Shakespeare's day I collected a mass of evidence that De Vere was the actual "William Shakespeare". Then the use of psychoanalytic method with this material led to what I feel is the discovery of the psychological context, the emotional predicaments, out of which a number of the individual creations of Shakespeare arose. I first presented some of my findings in articles which applied the Freudian method without reference to biography ("Othello's Obsessions," *THE AMERICAN IMAGO*, 1952; "Shakespeare's Early Errors," *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 1955). Encouraged by the response of readers from different walks of life, I ventured several essays reporting the biographic evidence. Two of these have appeared in print, in *THE AMERICAN IMAGO*, "The Confessions of William Shakespeare," a study of the Sonnets, and "Othello in Reality." The following analysis of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* is intended for a sequel to "Shakespeare's Early Errors," or rather to an unprinted article dealing with the historic and personal background of the *Comedy of Errors*.

This is the rarest dream that e'er dull sleep
Did mock sad fools withal.

1

A hundred years ago the consensus of researchers in the art of Shakespeare held that the play *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* was not altogether his handiwork. They pointed out that it was excluded from the first collection of his works, the folio of 1623. Not until 1664 did it enter the Shakespeare

canon, and then it came in the disreputable company of six apocryphal plays. The printer Edward Blount, who took a leading part in the publication of the first folio, registered *Pericles* in the spring of 1608, but when it arrived, in a spoiled text, on the bookstalls this year another publisher's name appeared on the titlepage. This is regarded as proof that the first editors of Shakespeare's dramas viewed *Pericles* as mainly the product of an alien pen. Still the tradition persisted that the divine Will had worked on the play, and the authority of Tennyson upheld the belief to the extent of numbering the very scenes the master's hand had issued or touched. There was much throwing about of brains over the problem whether he had revised and improved an old romance, or sketched a new drama and left it to some impoverished wit to finish. With the outstanding exception of Georg Brandes, the commentators stood practically unanimous in the opinion that the first two acts — dealing with the incest of King Antiochus — and the two scenes in Act IV which take place in a brothel must have been written by a hack like George Wilkins, whose novel *The Painful Adventures of Pericles, Prince of Tyre* appeared in 1608, frankly based on "the Play of *Pericles*, as it was lately presented" on the stage. Brandes considered that Wilkins and a collaborator wrote the play and sold it to Shakespeare's troop; it was then, he thinks, submitted to the greater poet, "who worked upon such parts as appealed to his imagination." Traces of his artistry, in the Danish critic's opinion, can be detected in the first two acts, unless they are simply imitations of his style. The brothel scenes, thought Brandes, were surely Shakespeare's work; scholars who denied this were just "pandering to the narrow-mindedness of the clergyman." He agreed that the romance abounded with verses of "feeble drivel," and that Shakespeare's own voice — "in unmistakable and royal power" — breaks in clearly at the start of Act III, not before. On esthetic rather than moral grounds, Brandes rejected the claim that Shakespeare wrote the opening story of incest. (1)

The majority of scholars in the nineteenth century

judged that Shakespeare's labor in *Pericles* was done in the last period of his creative life. They found it impossible to accept the declaration of John Dryden (in 1684) that it was composed at the dawn of Shakespeare's theatrical aspiration:

Shakespear's own Muse her *Pericles* first bore,
The Prince of Tyre was elder than the Moor:
'Tis miracle to see a first good play . . .

On the side of Dryden, in the eighteenth century, Edmund Malone once cast the weight of his learning. He argued that "*Pericles* was the entire work of Shakespeare, and one of his earliest compositions." (2) Later Malone changed his mind, and suggested that the dramatist had "repaired" an ancient piece, though the crudities of the drama might still be deemed the ebullition of his own novice pen. Most of Malone's fellow experts inclined to Alexander Pope's decision that the whole play was "wretched," unworthy of the sweet singer of the Avon. The revelation by Tennyson of speeches in it comparable to the noblest in *King Lear* and *The Tempest* did not succeed in convincing the masses of playgoers and students that Pope was wrong. In the present century the Pope decision has been rigidly supported by critics who view the sublime passages in *Pericles* as mere mimicry or plagiarism, echoes of Shakespeare in the final stage of his art. A few of them contend that Shakespeare was really dead when it was performed in 1608 and never could have predicted that thousands would crowd to see and enjoy it, decade after decade.

It is my belief that the play, with all its flaws and repulsive features, is truly Shakespeare's handiwork, written first in green youth and renovated in his gray age. Psychoanalysis will bear witness to the veracity of the claim. Later on I will attempt to show at what time and under what emotional necessity the dramatist created this curious romance.

Among Shakespeare's contemporaries there arose at least one man who protested against the fame of the drama. His affectionate friend and severest critic, Ben Jonson, fumed over its blemishes and sneered at "the loathed stage"

that profited from it. One of the last comedies by this great competitor of Shakespeare went down under the scowls of the public, and Jonson dashed off an ode denouncing the age's theatrical appetite (1631):

No doubt some mouldy tale,
Like *Pericles*, and stale
As the shrieve's crusts, and nasty as his fish-
scraps, out of every dish
Thrown forth, and rakt into the common tub,
May keep up the Play-club.

Pericles was certainly a prized item of diet in the "common tub" of the theatre in those aftermath days of the English Renaissance. The verdict of the commons, to be sure, did not spring from their own ethical or esthetic inquiries; it reverberated the fashionable judgment of their superiors. It was the aristocracy that set the seal of public approval on the play. As the Prologue says,

Lords and Ladies in their lives
Have read it for restoratives.

Its popularity ended forever with the fall from moral and artistic authority of the class for whom it was composed.

Those who are not revolted today by its grim sport with obscenity will probably damn the drama for its disunity, the puerile episodic structure, the bewildering mixture of fashions in rhetoric, and the phenomenal lack of controlling thought in the sequence of the acts. "The reader will seek in vain," said Brandes, "for any intention — I do not mean moral, but any fundamental idea in the play." (3) He rightly spurns the conclusion offered by the "chorus," ancient John Gower, that the play presents a contrast between a wicked princess and a virtuous one. The dramatist grants but one isolate glimpse of the wicked princess at the beginning, lets us hear only two lines from her lips. And her tragedy has no necessary connection with the ensuing plot. The story might have begun with the second act, and barring allusion to the incestuous princess made fair theatrical sense. The Prince of Tyre might have been portrayed from the start

as a shipwrecked hero seeking fortune and a bride. Why did Shakespeare have to picture him in headlong flight from the wicked lady of Antioch? It may be replied that he pictured his protagonist as he found him in the predicament of hoary legend, for instance in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1483). We still feel impelled to wonder why he thought it imperative to follow the old legend in such ugly detail. He must have known how Geoffrey Chaucer had criticized his friend Gower's version of the story — "so horrible a tale for to read." What attracted the dramatist to the horror of it? that is the question. The answer to this riddle should provide us with the major motive for the composing of *Pericles*, and consequently bring to light the fundamental idea which Brandes missed. The unity of the romance will have to be hunted beyond the range of conscious art or intention, in the sphere of the artist's unconscious. There alone can we find out how a tale so gamey as *Pericles* could sustain a spell on the intelligence of generations, and help "keep up the Play-club," despite the sarcasms of Ben Jonson and his fastidious college followers.

2

The incest motive in the first act of *Pericles* sounds forthrightly from the mouth of the poet Gower, who provides a choral commentary on each act. His excuse for introducing the incest theme is simply that he is following an old tradition: "I tell you what mine authors say." When we examine these authors carefully we soon learn that Shakespeare has not told us what they actually say. He has modified, transfigured, and cut out certain elements in their narratives, and put in significant features entirely his own. There is perhaps no more reliable guide to the endopsychic life of Shakespeare than the study of the way he handled his source materials. In the case of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* this study illumines the mind of the dramatist with a heat that many of us may find difficult to bear. This is possibly the main reason for scholastic neglect of the play. The reward of inquiry cannot be said "To glad your ears,

and please your eyes," as Gower promises that the drama will. At the end the best we possess is the knowledge of a few pathetic facts. The pathos becomes manifest at once when we compare Shakespeare's treatment of the incest theme with the treatment by his tiresome authors.

The play opens in the city of Antioch in the reign of a king named Antiochus the Great. Old Gower, in the Prologue, tells us that this king had a wife who died leaving one child, a girl (not named). Antiochus became too fond of his heiress, "And her to incest did provoke." At first they felt ashamed of their passion. But custom, says the poet, custom or "long use" led them to reckon it not a sin. In quaint mimicry of Gower's fourteenth century verse, the dramatist comments on their love:

Bad child, worse father. To entice his own
To evil should be done by none.

The beauty and riches of the princess attracted a host of nobles and princes to Antioch in the hope of winning her, in Shakespeare's phrase, "as a bedfellow, In marriage pleasures, playfellow." Among those who contested for the heiress was young Pericles, the Prince of Tyre.

When he arrived in Antioch he saw the walls of the royal palace garnished with the heads of earlier lovers of the princess. He learnt that they had been cut off because of their failure to solve a certain riddle the king had set down as the sole obstacle on the road to his daughter's heart. Whoever wished her for a bride would have to interpret the riddle truthfully, or submit his neck to the executioner. Pericles was ready to hazard death for her sake. On the starry night of his drama's first scene, eager to try his luck, he confronts the mysterious girl and her strict yet witty father. The nameless one appears clothed like a bride and speaks her only lines, wishing him briefly prosperity and happiness. Then the Prince, after some hyperbolic utterance of his desire for her, and a brave glance at the bloody faces on the palace wall, reads the enigma of Antiochus:

I am no viper, yet I feed
On mother's flesh which did me breed:
I sought a husband, in which labour
I found that kindness in a father;
He's father, son, and husband mild;
I mother, wife; and yet his child:
How they may be, and yet in two,
As you will live, resolve it you.

For this doggerel Shakespeare sacrificed the laconic force of the riddle as it stands in the prose of Lawrence Twine's *Pattern of Painful Adventures* (1576): "I am carried with mischief; I eat my mother's flesh; I seek my brother, my mother's husband, and cannot find him." (4) The princes who lost their heads seem to have read the puzzle without comprehending simply because the idea of incest between Antiochus and his daughter was beyond their credulity. They could not trust the sensible and true vouch of their own eyes. The perfervid imagination of Pericles leaps to the solution at once.

He lifts his eyes from the riddle to gaze his last on the princess of Antioch — "this glorious casket stor'd with ill." He sighs, confessing a residue of desire, but pride and religion will not endure the prospect of union with her. He compares her body to a musical instrument whose strings are false, played before the true moment for her tune. So "Hell only danceth at so harsh a chime."

To the mighty father he talks in more bitter and evasive vein, generalizing on the sad condition of persons who realize what wrongs their monarchs do and have no strength to do more than meditate about the sins of the kings. He concludes that it is good to smother knowledge which might make matters worse, and asks the permission of Antiochus to keep silence on the riddle. His majesty pretends not to understand the hint. He graciously allows Pericles forty days in which to deliver his solution, and walks away with his girl, wishing under his breath that he could take instant possession of the young man's head.

As soon as the king is gone, the solitary Pericles unloads his stifling thoughts about the "foul incest." He sus-

pects that Antiochus apprehended his insight to the truth and will scheme to silence him forever. At once he resolves, "By flight I'll shun the danger which I fear." That very night he quits Antioch. Before the king hears of the escape he hires the courtier Thaliard to poison the Prince. When the flight is reported Thaliard swears to kill Pericles with a pistol, and sets sail for Tyre.

In fashioning the plot Shakespeare ignored the real history of the country in which he set his opening scene. There exists a Syrian tale of incest about Antiochus the son of the monarch Seleucus, but it deals with a passion for a mother-in-law. Besides this Antiochus was not the one known to history as the Great. The reign of the Great Antiochus III (223-187 B.C.) yields no story remotely resembling the legend that Shakespeare tells. It is narrated as authentic chronicle by Godfrey of Viterbo, a medieval historian from whose *Pantheon* John Gower derived his poetic version of the legend. Godfrey depicted the Prince of Tyre, named Apollonius, as a fugitive from Antiochus III. There is no doubt now that the origin of his history was a Latin novel (also broadcast in the popular *Gesta Romanorum*) which was almost certainly founded on a lost Greek romance. In the Latin text Antioch is described as the "paternal kingdom" (*patrium regnum*) of the runaway hero. (5) This seems to indicate that the Latin fiction is a partially censored form of the legend. In its beginning Prince Apollonius most likely became the heir of Antiochus by marriage with the wicked daughter. The king's vindictiveness would then have flowed from jealousy not of a suitor but a son-in-law. In order to avoid this spectacle of the good hero living intimately with the incestuous, a Latin scribe would have suppressed the reason for the Tyrian's claim to the kingdom of Antioch. An old French version makes the claim intelligible by portraying Antiochus as a former vassal owing allegiance to the father of Apollonius. (6) Shakespeare expunged every trace of the hero's right to the crown of Antioch — unless we consider the mere appearance of the princess robed like a bride a vestige of the original marriage plot. The process

of moral censorship which commenced in the Latin with vacillations emerges in the English playwright with wonderful emphatic distortions.

If the business of the "paternal kingdom" bothered our poet, he was surely more annoyed by the way his authors drew the reaction of "Apollonius" to the disappointment in Antioch. In their narratives the Tyrian retreats from the diplomatically hidden malignance of the king to think of some method to obtain the prize that Antiochus denies him. Having solved the riddle and earned the heiress, Apollonius protests: "I am notwithstanding restrained from her."

(7) He determines that he will not rest until he gets the promised reward. Shakespeare's Pericles displays a very different attitude. He runs away to his home in Tyre, and instead of resuming the reins of government goes off to live in lonely idleness, sunk in infinite gloom. Pericles is a poet, not a man of action; obviously created in the image of his maker.

The poor Prince feels not the faintest pulse of gladness for his escape from the den of iniquity in Antioch. Our dramatist tries to excuse his sorrowing by some utterances of patriotic worry over the fate of Tyre if the incestuous king should wage war on the city in order to destroy the Prince who knows his secret. Pericles believes that the mere ostentation of battle from Antioch would scare his Tyrians into ruin. Duteous concern for their welfare, he says, not pity for himself, prompts him to the resolution to continue his flight, to desert Tyre and sail to a country beyond the despot's reach. He confides in none but a wise old courtier named Helicanus. He tells him how he had journeyed to Antioch glowing with the hope of a magnificent alliance, from which might spring a child who would bring great joy to his people. This hope had been quenched by the discovery of a horror yonder "as black as incest." Helicanus is a counselor worthy of his Prince. He grieves listening to the anxiety of Pericles about the danger of an Antioch invasion, and agrees that the tyrant would not spare the expense of "public war or private treason" to shut the Prince's mouth.

He advises Pericles to go voyaging until Antiochus forgets his anger or dies. Gratified by Helicanus's echo of his own conscience, the Prince of Tyre arranges for a swift and secret departure from the city, leaving the good old man in charge of his state affairs.

If the application of skepticism to the flimsy excuses of Pericles seems to be like breaking a butterfly on an engine, it should be remembered that the butterfly itself is just mechanical. By exposing the theatrical rationalizations of Shakespeare we expect to attain a clear view of the life current below the surface of his plot. It is impossible to accept the patriotic plangency and altruism of his protagonist at their face value. Never before and never after does he manifest a gleam of solicitude for the welfare of Tyre. His heart feels deep pain for one person alone, the forlorn Pericles. This compassion is beautifully communicated, yet the cause of it remains shrouded in an extraordinary suit of solemn black. We are left in the dark with the question why the Prince had to sink into a torpor of melancholy after his escape from the evil charmer of Antioch. The hero himself asks the question:

Why should this change of thoughts,
The sad companion, dull-ey'd melancholy,
Be my so us'd a guest, as not an hour
In the day's glorious walk or peaceful night—
The tomb where grief should sleep—can breed me quiet? (I, ii.)

One answer that will occur to many of us is that Pericles is sorrowing over the loss of the princess, whom he had vowed he loved. This is a more trustworthy reason for his mood than worry over the chance of an unprovoked attack from Antioch. If the melancholy of Pericles was induced by his sudden bereavement or break with Antiochus's daughter, why could not their creator say so? There was nothing wrong in the Prince's chivalrous love for her untarnished reputation, nothing deplorable in his wish to be the son-in-law of the mighty Antiochus. Shakespeare gave him every reason to be happy in his virtue and proud of his wisdom in eluding the snares of the tyrant. And yet he has stricken

his protagonist with unreasonable grief. The romance did not require it. We can only conclude that it represents a lapse of art that betrays a private emotion of the dramatist.

3

We have no trouble in recognizing the melancholy of the Prince of Tyre as the same peculiar grief of mind that afflicts the twin Greek heroes of the *Comedy of Errors*. (8) In both cases we find a sudden loss of the beloved after a sojourn in a strange city, then the seeking of peace of heart by sea. These are of course recurrent themes in ancient Greek romance, and favorites of the Elizabethan stage in the youth of Shakespeare. We want to know the secret reasons for the dramatist's attraction to these themes, why he built on their foundation the plays which may be regarded as his earliest theatrical work. What is ancient Greek romance to him, or he to Greek romance, that he should weep for it? Our answer has already been outlined in the chapters on the *Comedy of Errors*. We see it confirmed and elaborated in the tragicomedy of *Pericles*.

The source of both plays is the grief of the poet that followed his estrangement from his wife.

In the *Errors* he produced an apology for his broken marriage, affirming that his wife was mainly to blame, because she had been shrewish and a tearful antagonist of his liberty. In a noble effort to be fair he made out a comic case for her, too. *I and my woman, the dramatist inwardly contended, have done nothing more damnable than entertain strangers as lovers. — She took me in, like Alcmena in Amphitruo, thinking that a hero was going to sleep by her side, and in happy ignorance she united with a god. Alas, poor god! He took in holy wedlock what he thought was an angel, and she turned out to be a termagant, at any rate a woman of torturing whim.* — Incidentally, there appears to be a reference to the comedy by Plautus in *Pericles*' line: "And if Jove stray, who dares say, Jove doth ill?" (I. i.)

In *Pericles* the writer presented this fatal break in his life as coming in the act of courtship. He drew himself as

the Prince of Tyre, courting a stranger, but one deserving "the embracements even of Jove himself" (I, i) — Alcmena's god. In the nameless princess of Antioch we behold a sketch of the poet's bride in starlight. Her father says that Lucina, the goddess of the moon, reigned at her conception: his speech reminds us of the heroine Luciana who, according to our theory on the *Errors*, lyrically represents both the moon and the girl whom Shakespeare made his bride. Luciana's love, Antipholus of Syracuse, had been prepared to desert her after a brief courtship, for no reason except the fancy that in loving her he might be "guilty to self-wrong." Pericles deserts Lucina's princess for a similar but stronger reason.

What did Shakespeare mean by accusing his wife and her father of the crime of incest? I think the accusation was first of all a lurid device to justify the breach between his unhappy Anne and himself. It was another of the dramatist's alibis: his way of stating that their divorce occurred because she had been irrevocably bound to her father's will, because she loved the old despot more than her husband.

While transforming his Anne into a lovely obscurity in a wedding gown and veil, the poet altered the contours of her father until they formed a pattern of abstract tyranny. None of the details he furnished to enliven their allegorical figures could assist us in identifying the real models for the incestuous pair. For in gratifying his personal grudge, by making two oppressors of his conscience the targets of hate on the stage, he had to be careful to protect himself against the peril of his father-in-law's wrath. William Cecil could not have recognized his own image in the cunning and cruel Antiochus.

Cecil knew that political enemies, especially the Roman Catholics among them, hailed him in bitter derision as the uncrowned monarch of England and called the state *regnum Cecilianae*. "Secretary Cecil," Thomas Stukeley declared, "may be called King of England." The Earl of Leicester once remarked that Cecil did not want the Queen to marry since he wished to remain king himself. (9) The anonymous

Catholic booklet, *A Treatise of Treasons* (1572), branded him a usurper and a criminal, but failed to draw up a factual indictment. His modern admirers concede that he lacked a strong sense of loyalty to his benefactors and had too large a faith in the power of the rack to wring the truth out of prisoners. If one translates these faults as treachery and tyranny one can understand why our noble poet envisaged him as King Antiochus. The Earl of Oxford had lived with Cecil from the time he was twelve until he became twenty-one, and he often witnessed his Lordship's defects in action within the family. The crafty minister did not scruple to practice espionage on his boy Thomas when the latter was a student in France. He may also have practiced a little household despotism with his two daughters. When his darling Anne was twelve he engaged her to marry Philip Sidney, and disputed for months with Sidney's father over the land and money he expected for their marriage. In February 1571 the Queen elevated him to the barony of Burghley. Though he affirmed himself "the poorest lord in England" he could no longer think of wedding his daughter to a young man of Philip's rank and means. His eye ranged the nobility for a grander catch. In April Edward de Vere took his place in the House of Lords. And on July 22 a humorous observer, Lord St. John, reported: "The Earl of Oxenford hath gotten himself a wife, or at least a wife hath caught him: this is the mistress Anne Cecil; whereunto the Queen hath given her consent, and the which hath caused great weeping, wailing, and sorrowful cheer of those that had hoped to have that golden day." The golden day was December 19. Catholic authors judged the wedding a triumph for the middle-class "heretic" rich, who they alleged were conspiring to get control of the kingdom. "Consider," said the author of *A Treatise of Treasons*, "how the Captain Catiline of this conjuration now linketh himself with the noblest and ancientest of your nobility (least in credit, I mean), how strong thereby he maketh himself." The Lord Treasurer's admirers will hardly deny that

his girl's chances of happiness with the nervous Earl counted for little when he negotiated this alliance. (10)

Shortly after the marriage De Vere began to importune his father-in-law to save his cousin Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, from the penalty of treason, to which he had been condemned for plotting with Queen Mary of Scotland. On January 20, 1572, Norfolk complained, "My cousin of Oxford is too negligent in his friend's causes." The Duke, locked in the Tower of London, had heard nothing of his kinsman's device — attempted some weeks before the Earl's wedding — to rescue him from prison and convey him by a specially provided ship to Spain. Feverishly Oxford exerted his influence for the sake of his aunt Frances's son; and four times Elizabeth demurred from letting the death warrant go. She told Burghley that the thought of Norfolk's execution was too terrible to her. He advised her against clemency. On March 18 his agent in Antwerp, John Lee, recorded Papist gossip that Oxford had "conceived some great displeasure" against his father-in-law for not using his authority to save the Duke: "whereupon," Lee wrote, "he hath, as they say here, put away from him the Countess his wife." This piece of gossip grew to amazing proportions after Norfolk was beheaded on June 2, 1572. Centuries later the antiquarian Edmund Lodge imagined the young Earl passionately beseeching Burghley to interfere in the Duke's behalf and storming at the minister's refusal — "he would revenge himself by ruining the Countess." He made his threat good, says Lodge, "for from that hour he treated her with the most shocking brutality, and having broken her heart, sold and dissipated the most part of his great fortune." (11) The source of this dramatic gossip has never been traced. We may be confident that Norfolk's brother, Lord Henry Howard, a far more clever conspirator, had a leading hand in the propagation of the tale. Perhaps he heard the original from Oxford's own tongue.

The Earl concealed his feelings on the death of his kinsman. In the ensuing summer he helped to amuse the Queen at his father-in-law's country mansion, Theobalds, and he

staged a mock-battle for her Majesty at Warwick on the Avon. The Treasurer and Countess Anne watched his joy in the mimic warfare. On August 24 the King of France and a party of Catholic fanatics in Paris carried out a massacre of Protestants, and when the news arrived in England the whole Court was steeped in gloom. Oxford and his wife went with her Majesty to London where he listened to French refugees' accounts of the tragedy.

He wrote to Burghley a long letter describing how they told of "their own overthrows, with tears falling from their eyes; a piteous thing to hear, but a cruel and far more grievous thing we must deem it though to see." The letter confessed a profound anxiety for the life of his Lordship. "Sith the world is so full of treasons, and vile instruments," said De Vere, "daily to attempt new and unlooked for things, good my Lord, I shall affectionately and heartily desire your L. to be careful both of yourself and of her Majesty, that your friends may long enjoy you, and you them." He reminded his Lordship how Edmund Mather had plotted to kill him and the Queen (for Norfolk's sake). Mather, who cursed Elizabeth for desiring "nothing but to feed her own lewd fantasy, and to cut off such of her nobility as were not perfumed and courtlike to please her delicate eye," died horribly for his design. Oxford warned Burghley to prepare for new schemes of assassination. "This estate," he declared, "hath depended on you a great while, as all the world doth judge, and now all men's eyes, not being occupied any more on these lost lords, are as it were on a sudden bent and fixed on you, as a singular hope and pillar, whereto the religion hath to lean. And blame me not," De Vere added, "though I am bolder with your L. at this present than my custom is, for I am one that count myself a follower of yours now in all fortunes; and what shall hap to you, I count it hap to myself, or at the least I will make myself a voluntary partaker of it."

One may surmise that the Earl protests too much his concern for Burghley's welfare, as if to quiet the inner voice that accused him of wishing his father-in-law a victim like

the lords of the Huguenots. "I humbly desire your L.," he goes on, "to pardon my youth, but to take in good part my zeal and affection towards you, as on whom I have builded my foundation, either to stand or fall. And good my Lord, think I do not this presumptuously, as to advise you that am but to take advice of your L., but to admonish you, as one with whom I would spend my blood and life. So much you have made me yours. And I do protest, there is nothing more desired of me than so to be taken and accounted of you." The writer displayed his good faith by assuring his Lordship that in the leases of his lands and sales of his other properties, "in this, as in all other things, I am to be governed and commanded at your Lordship's good devotion." (12)

These promises brought Burghley no nearer to the fulfilment of his son-in-law's desire for a place of splendor in the state. On September 22 Oxford wrote again, from Cecil House in Westminster, pleading for a chance to win military honor: "If there were any service to be done abroad, I had rather serve there than at home, where yet some honour were to be got. If there be any setting forth to sea, to which service I bear the most affection, I shall desire your L. to give me and get me that favor and credit . . . that I might make one." He announced that Lady Anne had departed for the country and he would follow — "as fast as I can get me out of town." They were bound for his house of Wivenhoe in Essex, by the North Sea. From this favorite retreat, the Earl wrote, "I shall be most willing to be employed on the sea coasts to be in a readiness with my countrymen against any invasion." (13) No call to arms came to him at Wivenhoe. So he resigned himself to the service of the Muses. He perused with great pleasure his friend Thomas Bedingfield's manuscript translation of Girolamo Cardano's *Consolation* (1542), a work primarily intended for melancholy intellects, and made up his mind to publish it himself, with a letter of introduction and a poem of praise. To let the book lie in "the waste bottoms of my chests," the Earl declared, would have been like committing murder. Eagerly

he got *Cardanus Comfort* ready for the press. It came out early in 1573. The Earl's introductory epistle promised that here was a volume to "comfort the afflicted, confirm the doubtful, encourage the coward. . . ." How much benefit he got from its philosophy, it is difficult to tell. His letter to Bedingfield shows that his thoughts gravitated constantly to death, in particular to the graves of loved ones. Wivenhoe was just a few miles from Colne Priory where so many lords and ladies of the house of Vere were buried.

By the autumn of 1573 Oxford had determined to leave his wife in order to voyage to Ireland, where his friend the Earl of Essex commanded the English troops. On November 1 Essex wrote to Burghley asking to be remembered with "your good Countess, your daughter, of whose match I mistrust not but your L. shall in the end receive singular comfort." The Lord Treasurer prevented this change of his son-in-law's horizon, with the result that Oxford commenced an intrigue with men hostile to Burghley's policies, men suspected of being in the pay of Spain. A gentleman adventurer named Ralph Lane kept Burghley in touch with the conspiracy, informing him how to "cut off not only this, but any other advantages that foreign factions may seek to take of (De Vere's) young unstaidd mind." Lane felt sorry for the distracted Earl. He hoped that Cecil would help the young man before he risked the fate of Norfolk: "A western Spanish storm," Lane wrote, "may, with some unhappy mate at helm, steer his noble bark so much to the northward" (into the orbit of the Queen of Scots) "that unawares he may wreck, as some of his noblest kind hath done, the more pity of their fault." Lane's testimony indicates that the soldier of fortune, Rowland York, who afterward played a sinister role in Oxford's divorce, was also involved in the Earl's pro-Spanish enterprise. (14) A few months later, Oxford ran away to Belgium, dreaming of military education on the staff of the Duke of Alva, and Thomas Bedingfield was sent to bring him home. These deeds of De Vere make perfectly plain how seriously we must take his avowals of zeal and affection toward the father of his wife.

Nevertheless Lord Burghley would have needed the eye of a clairvoyant or a poet to perceive in the Shakespeare vision of Antioch's royal "bed of blackness" his son-in-law's response to the fact that the Countess Anne was "most directed by her father and mother." He might have sensed the meaning of *Pericles* if he ever saw the drama at Court and detected in the name of the despot of *Antioch* an intimation that the dramatist conceived him as *anti-Oxford*.

4

Let us recall the letter of the Earl dated July 13, 1576, in which he promised that if Burghley would abide by the limits he set for Anne's enjoyment of the Court, "I will bear with your fatherly desire towards her." The peculiarity of the preposition *towards*, where one might have expected *for*, suggests that when De Vere wrote these words he was already harboring a fantasy of "untimely clasplings" between the statesman and his daughter. This illusion would have been strengthened by his reading of *The Pattern of Painful Adventures* by Lawrence Twine, which was licensed for publication on July 17. Perhaps he knew Twine personally, for that author belonged to the same family as the Thomas Twine who dedicated to Oxford in 1573 his *Breviary of Britain*, a book which expressed the hope that the Earl one day would become "the chiefest stay of this your commonwealth and country." *The Pattern of Painful Adventures* retold the sad romance of Apollonius, Prince of Tyre. Unquestionably it sent the poet back to John Gower's version of the tale, and so led to the writing of *Pericles*, in my opinion, a short while after the writing of the first *Comedy of Errors*.

We have noticed how Burghley threatened his son-in-law (on July 10) with the absolute loss of his "good will or friendship" if he persisted in crediting the slanders against the Cecil family. The warning must have struck a chord of terror in the heart of De Vere, remembering how mercilessly his Lordship had worked to cut off cousin Norfolk's head. "I am too little," says the Prince of Tyre (I, ii), to contend with King Antiochus: and in the avowal we listen to the

pangs of psychic impotence that the little Earl Edward had to bear when he stood in the presence of the man whom Elizabeth called *burly* by name and by nature. The bare thought of the politician excited the fear of emasculation which vibrates through almost all the works of Shakespeare.

We see its impact in the opening scene of *Pericles*, in the symbol of the severed heads on the palace of Antioch. They stand for the pride of young sex that dared in ignorance to provoke a father's jealousy. Our Tyrian hero escapes decapitation but only by surrendering his crown. He saves his skin at the price of manliness — in his own phrase, punishing "that before that he (Antiochus) would punish." It is conceivable that the castration complex of the poet induced him to drop the name Apollonius and call his protagonist Pericles, after the idol of Athenian democracy. The sound of this Greek name may have appealed to the prince of puns as resembling a compound of two homely English words: prick and leese, meaning lose, as in Shakespeare's Sonnet V—

But flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet,
Leese but their show.

Of course the poet was aware that Pericles suggested the Latin *periculos*, from which we get the word *perils*. No peril, however, "drew sleep out of his eyes, blood from his cheeks," like his conception of steel being wielded against his sex. That is what the fancy of Antiochus's onslaught on Tyre signifies: that is why he could not imagine his countrymen standing firm before the onslaught.

The huge king in truth is a shadow composite of the poet's two fathers, the one in law and the one his mother married. Certainly the spell of dread that Lord Burghley cast on Edward de Vere operated on his nerves the way it did because of the permanent impression made on them first by childhood dread of Lord John, his father in fact. It meant retribution for the incestuous yearning of his infancy, which emerges in the drama twofold, projected as a crime on a substitute for his father, and transmuted to an innocent

passion for a stranger, a woman unknown and veiled. Shakespeare turned the tables on the lord of his superego by making him guilty of the very deed which, as we deduced from the analysis of his *Errors*, excruciated his conscience under the aspect of adultery.

Ultimately, I assume, the nameless princess stands for the dramatist's mother. He loved her distantly and with superstitious terror, unconsciously convinced that if he came too close he would hazard a mortal or an incurable wound. Out of that unconscious conviction the poet's wit evolved this cryptic couplet of Pericles (I, i):

All love the womb that their first being bred;
Then give my tongue like leave, to love my head.

The phantom of maternity within him terrified not only by conjuring visions of his father and lost masculinity. She also raised in his unconscious the notion that she herself possessed the private part of a man. For his portrait of the princess of Antioch, Shakespeare used one of the oldest symbols of the organ, the tree. Pericles calls her a "celestial tree," and Antiochus compares her to the golden-fruited Hesperides — "dangerous to be touch'd" — an admonition that points to the germ of the phallic complex in a paternal menace to masturbation.

Afterward the king refers to the Tyrian himself as a fair tree, wishing that he could have his head. In the Prince's soliloquy in the next scene he compares his spirit to "the tops of trees, Which fence the roots they grow by and defend them." Here the word "tops" may look extravagant if we did not realize how acutely the poet suffered, at the time he wrote the play, from hidden anxiety about his penis. Perhaps he thought it had somehow been deprived of vitality everywhere but at the foreskin. I find support for this idea in the emblem selected by Pericles for the pageant of knighthood in the second act:

A withered branch, that's only green at top;
The motto, 'In hac spe vivo.' (In this hope I live.)

The genital anxiety reflected by these verses carried with it an uncommon torment of another amatory zone of the poet, his mouth. Feasting and fornicating were probably so closely joined in his unconscious that they felt like a single process. The reader will recollect what fun he had in *Errors* confusing a dinner with adultery. In the near-tragedy of *Pericles* the intertwining of his notions of eating and sexual intercourse produces images of horror. He likens the incest of Antioch to a child's feeding on mother's flesh. The analogy reminds us of the fact, uncovered by psychoanalysis, that poets in general are afflicted with oral erotic distemper. (15) They all begin life with savage cravings of hunger toward their mothers. They wish to eat them up, and imagine that their mothers might turn to rip and swallow them. And they grow, sometimes to venerable age, with the mouth-lust badly subdued, eternally twitching and gaping for its opportunities, and pausing only to despair. Concerning the oral distemper of Edward de Vere, we have the evidence of the courtier Charles Arundel that the Earl retained a memory of having tasted blood in his childhood. (16)

The cannibal impulse has inspired a massive literature, usually in the form of projection on parents. Thus the appetite connected with incest in the first scene of *Pericles* makes its appearance in the fourth scene as a sign of maternal depravity. Here Shakespeare pictures a famine in the seaport of Tarsus, with the people tottering on the edge of bestiality:

Those mothers who, to nouse up their babes,
Thought nought too curious, are ready now
To eat those little darlings whom they lov'd.

Our hero, learning of the starvation in Tarsus, sails from Tyre with a fleet loaded with corn and wins the gratitude of the Cilician city. The king Cleon and his queen Dionyza welcome him as a godsend, but he is unable to accept their hospitality long. A letter from Helicanus reports that Thaliard, the agent of Antioch, is after him, and immediate-

ly the Prince takes to sea again. A tempest overtakes him and his vessel splits. He is the sole survivor, thrown ashore at night on the coast of Africa, near the town of Pentapolis.

Now occurs a comic interlude (II, i). The Prince listens to some fishermen discussing life on the sea, in a manner that proves them English clowns in disguise. One, named Patch-breech, expresses a fear of the "porpus," which bounces and tumbles in the waves portending to the sailor a wash. The humor of this fisherman's fear, I guess, consists of an allusion to a joke by the famous comedian Richard Tarlton, who seems to have come from the fishing town of Colchester, within walking distance of Oxford's castle of Wivenhoe. Contemporary anecdotes of Dick Tarlton's antics in the Court show him a jester on the side of the Earl, witty at the expense of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh, and others whom Oxford feared, envied and hated. One of his best known jokes was a simple sport with the word *porpoise*, which he confounded with *prepuce*. (17) If our dramatist intended a phallic allusion in Patch-breech's remarks, one could anticipate that he would follow it with a reference to oral ferocity. Patch-breech's next remark is "I marvel how the fishes live in the sea." His master answers: "Why, as men do a-land: the great ones eat up the little ones."

The master goes on to sarcasm against the "whales," the rich misers of his country, so avid for landed property, they "never leave gaping till they've swallowed the whole parish, church, steeple, bells, and all." A plain Protestant listening to this bitterness might have taken it as an attack on the people of the period who were seeking to increase their acres and riches by enclosure of village commons and rejection of church rights to real estate. On the other hand, to an Englishman who adhered to the Catholic faith (as De Vere did in secret in 1576) the polemic would have sounded like one of those old nursery rimes which, many scholars think, were aimed by the priests against King Henry VIII and the "whales" of the upstart bourgeois aristocracy who profited from his expropriation of the Catholic Church's

wealth. Perhaps Shakespeare was remembering "Robin the bobbin" when he wrote the master-fisherman's lines.

Robin the bobbin,
The big-bellied ben,
He ate more meat than three-score men;
He ate the church,
He ate the steeple,
He ate the priests,
And all the people;
And yet he complained that his belly was not
full. (18)

The poet's sentiments on this business of parish goods, which under feudal principles were dedicated to the glory of God and charity for the poor, caused him to mix his metaphors. He shifted from whales to bees, wishing that "We would purge the land of these drones, that rob the bee of her honey." His fishermen's fervor has an interesting parallel in an anecdote told by the theologian and antiquary Thomas Fuller. In 1577, Fuller says, the Earl of Oxford presented the rectory of Lavenham, which had long existed within the Earldom's gift, to the Reverend Henry Copinger. He wanted to attach one string to the grant, "this condition, that he should pay no tithes for his park (nearby), being almost half the land of the parish. Mr. Copinger told his Lordship 'that he would rather return the presentation than, by such sinful gratitude, betray the rights of the Church,' which answer so affected the Earl that he replied, 'I scorn that my estate should swell with Church goods.' " (19)

Pericles approaches the fishermen, entreating their charity. He describes himself as a plaything of the waters and the wind, which, like antagonists in a game, knock him helplessly back and forth. These forces, we have seen in the study of the *Comedy of Errors*, symbolize the lady and the lord who were enshrined dynamically in the dramatist's superego. The following episode provides us with an instructive example of his ego's fluctuations between their magnetic poles in his mind. In headlong flight from two figures who stand for the bad aspects of the father and mother Pericles

comes to a place where he can adore two figures who stand for their good sides. He meets and falls in love with "the good King Simonides" and his angelic daughter, Princess Thaisa. To be exact, he falls in love with them before their meeting. Hearing the fishermen call Simonides good, and learning that "there are princes and knights come from all parts of the world to just and tourney" for Thaisa's love, he desires to attempt the conquest of the beautiful stranger for himself. Then a suit of rusty armor is seen caught in a fishing net. The Prince identifies it as a bequest from his dead father, which luckily did not sink with his ship. Shakespeare lingers affectionately on the memory of his father's will. It consoles him for the grief he had to bear for the unconscious guilt of jealousy. "He lov'd me dearly" The passage compels attention to the last testament of Lord John de Vere, in which we learn with wonder that he appointed his boy Edward to act as an executor together with Sir William Cecil and Sir Nicholas Bacon. Pericles, exulting in the armored guise of his father, goes once more to make love to a strange lady.

5

The king of Pentapolis has the wit, the craft, and a little of the cruelty of the king of Antioch. He commands his daughter with threats ("Do as I bid you, or you'll move me else"—II, iii). He amuses himself by tormenting his future son-in-law, springing a trap to detect his real feelings about Thaisa. The poet presents both monarchs as men more interested in their daughters than in affairs of state. They praise the beauty of these girls in strikingly similar terms. Antiochus says of the nameless one, "Nature this dowry gave, to glad her presence" (I, i); Simonides says that "nature gat (Thaisa) For men to see, and seeing wonder at" (II, ii). The author has made both kings widowers. This served the aim of dramatic economy and also executed a kind of vengeance for the Earl of Oxford, whose mother-in-law, you remember, had wished him dead.

The dramatist's own father becomes visible in Simonides

only in his postures of kind and godly royalty, shining like the Lord in stained glass. When Simonides acts like a human being he becomes a comic portrait of Oxford's father-in-law. The Tyrian wanderer gazes at the father of Thaisa and remarks to himself, "Yon king's to me like to my father's picture" (II, iii). He recalls his father sitting at a banquet, surrounded by stars like the sun. They revered his Majesty like the heavenly bodies worshipping the boy dreamer Joseph in the Bible. For young Shakespeare, to think of his father as a man like other men was sacrilege. It meant thinking of him in the act of procreation, the abandon of sex. He could not endure this. Consequently he stripped his mother's lover of worldliness and the flesh and exalted him to godhood, committing with this compliment unconscious "homicide." Gods have been created in the same way before, and since. Simonides ceases to be godlike and a pattern of abstract stateliness when he occupies himself with love matters, in particular the wedding of his daughter. This plainly signified to our poet a degradation, and therefore proper stuff for comedy. He pictured Lord Burghley for his play as a marriage contriver, not unlike his Pandar of Troy in *Troilus and Cressida*. "Few things," Freud observes, "can afford the child greater pleasure than when the grown-up lowers himself to his level," and much of comic ingenuity and hilarity comes from a process of debasement. (20) The child in the playwright enjoyed the levity that William Cecil exhibited on certain occasions, but he could not help looking on it as a descent from splendor, bringing his Lordship down to the plane where the "mad-cap" Earl was doomed to spend most of his days. One sign of the lowering of Burghley for the purposes of *Pericles* may be seen in the fact that the original legend of Apollonius of Tyre names his royal father-in-law Archistrates or Alti-Stratus, both names indicating lofty rank. Shakespeare declined to give him a name suggestive of highness. I regret that I am unable to guess why he called the king Simonides.

The spiritual identity of the bad girl of Antioch and the good girl of Pentapolis is revealed by their poetic association

with the moon, somewhat like the two heroines of *Errors*. We are told that the moon-goddess Lucina prevailed at the conception of the princess without a name. In source books of *Pericles* the Prince's second love is actually named Lucina. Shakespeare changed it, presumably, because he wanted to avoid suspicion that he was lightheartedly handling English majesty, for poets frequently extolled Queen Elizabeth with the names of pagan goddesses of the moon, Diana, Cynthia, and so on. To name a girl so eager for wedlock as the child of Simonides after the virgin queen of heaven was sure to strike a subject of Elizabeth as satire on her. Our dramatist prevented anyone from fancying that her Majesty was hinted in Thaisa by describing the latter in terms that were applicable to her Majesty's servants, the Maids of Honor, among whom Anne Cecil once shone. Thus Simonides announces that his girl desires not to marry for a year (II, v):

twelve moons more she'll wear Diana's livery;
This by the eye of Cynthia hath she vow'd.

The personalities of the two princesses have one distinction in common, which may be termed audacity in quietness. Each pursues the enticement of her heart with noiseless will-power. Yet each finds her satisfaction in the fulfilment of her father's will.

Shakespeare gave his protagonist's wife the name of her daughter in John Gower's poem.

On parting from the princess of Antioch, Pericles assured her, "Fair glass of light, I lov'd you and could still" He arrives at the feet of Thaisa because she resembled the noble lady of his dreams, the incestuous one. In turning his passion from the nameless lady to the princess of Pentapolis, the dramatist was not simply returning to the past of his love for Lord Burghley's daughter — as I conjecture he did in the *Comedy of Errors*, when his Syracusan hero, repelled by the malignant Adriana, makes love to her sweet virgin sister. The reincarnation of Antiochus's daughter as Thaisa expressed the desire of the poet for renewal of his passion for Anne Cecil, a desire he was reluctant

to confess even to himself. He voiced it through the medium of Thaisa's father, who tells her (II, ii):

From the dejected state wherein he is,
He hopes by you his fortune yet may flourish.

Nostalgia for the lost love inspired the tournament scene in which Pericles wins the heart of Thaisa by his prowess in his father's obsolete armor. This tournament evokes the memory of the "solemn just at the tilt, tourney and barrier" which was held before the Queen at Westminster on the first days of May 1571. The combatants included De Vere, Sir Henry Lee, Charles Howard, Christopher Hatton, as challengers and against them rode Thomas Cecil, Thomas Bedingfield, and Thomas Knyvet, the last of whom played a fatal role in Oxford's life. All the knights did valiantly, a contemporary records, "but the chief honor was given to the Earl of Oxford." (21) He broke thirty-two lances and scored three direct hits on head and chest, and won a tablet of diamonds. The sight of him galloping in crimson made an amorous impression on a number of Maids of Honor as well as Anne Cecil. Oxford himself was not unimpressed by the vision. When he visited the island of Sicily in 1575 he issued a challenge at Palermo "Against all manner of persons whatsoever, and at all manner of weapons, as tournaments, barriers, with horse and armor, to fight a combat with any whatsoever in defense of his Prince and Country." The Italians admired his gallantry but none ventured to answer his call. (22) In honor of his wedding with Anne Cecil the poet Giles Fletcher penned a Latin poem that devotes several ardent lines to a picture of the Earl's fiery energy in these mock-duels, his daring and skill, especially his grace in horsemanship. (23) Perhaps it was under the spell of Anne's rapture over his prowess that the noble orphan resolved to make her his wife.

Without his wife young Oxford felt worse than lonesome. He felt impotent, cut off from his true career as a nobleman, with no prospect of ever showing England and the world what a general or admiral he could make. He

whose education, in the phrase of Pericles, had been in arts and arms seemed fated to have his genius confined to the arts, moreover those arts considered by men of action barely better than child's play. Contemplating the portrait of his father, who had obviously thrilled the lad Edward indelibly with his experience as a soldier, the poet believed that destiny or fortune had cheated him, ordaining him to a clandestine career with the inkhorn:

now his son's like a glow-worm in the night,
The which hath fire in darkness, none in light. (II, iii.)

The Earl's melancholy got little relief from the praise he bestowed on himself from the mouth of King Simonides:

In framing artists art hath thus decreed,
To make some good, but others to exceed.
And you're her labour'd scholar. (II, iii.)

The king lauds Pericles as the best dancer among the knights at his court, and later calls him "music's master." The Apollonius of Lawrence Twine is said to have skill in all things; he excels with the tennis racquet and the harp. The praise of Pericles, however, is more than a stage application of Twine's text. Dancing and music were arts in which the Earl of Oxford labored to shine. "The Queen's Majesty," wrote Gilbert Talbot to his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury, on May 11, 1572, "delighteth more in his (Oxford's) personage and his dancing and his valliantness than any other." She thought his skill in the coranto, the galliard, and the lavolt worth showing off to French ambassadors. As for music, we learn from the life of England's outstanding composer of this period, William Byrd, that the Earl recognized his genius almost at the start of his career and encouraged it with characteristic generosity. About 1574 Oxford made arrangements to give Byrd the income from his manor of Battleshall in Essex for 31 years. The musician's work as a gentleman of her Majesty's Chapel must have led to their collaboration in theatre. We know that Byrd composed at least one piece for which De Vere supplied the inspiration: "The Earl of Oxford's March Before the

Battle." As late as 1591 the Earl's "great affection to his noble science" of music emboldened the Irish composer John Farmer, who sang as a boy in the choir of St. Paul's Cathedral, to dedicate to him *Forty Several Ways of Two Parts in One Made upon a Plain Song*. In 1599 Farmer acknowledged Oxford's patronage with the dedication of his *First Set of English Madrigals*. "So far," he wrote, "have your honourable favours outstripped all means to manifest my humble affection that there is nothing left but praying and wondering." These madrigals he offered as "remembrances of my service and witnesses of your Lordship's liberal hand, by which I have so long lived." "Without flattery," Farmer declared, persons who knew Oxford were aware that "using this science as a recreation," the Earl had "overgone most of them that make it a profession." (24)

Lord Burghley did not esteem art like Simonides, and never praised his rhapsodic son-in-law as the young man wished that he would. The best that Burghley could say of him — so far as we can judge from his Lordship's extant writings — are the few lukewarm compliments to be found in a letter he wrote to the Earl of Rutland on August 15, 1571, announcing the engagement of his Anne to De Vere. This letter is a fine illustration of Cecil's labor with prose.

"I think it doth seem strange to your Lordship to hear of a purposed determination in my Lord of Oxford to marry with my daughter; and so, before his Lordship moved it to me, I might have thought it, if any other had moved it to me himself. For at his own motion I could not well imagine what to think, considering I never meant to seek it nor hoped of it. And yet reason moved me to think well of my Lord, and to acknowledge myself greatly beholden to him, as indeed I do. Truly, my Lord, after I was acquainted of the former intention of a marriage with Master Philip Sidney, whom always I loved and esteemed, I was fully determined to have of myself moved no marriage for my daughter until she should have been near sixteen, that with moving I might also conclude. And yet I thought it not inconvenient in the meantime, being free to hearken to any motion made by

such others as I should have cause to like. Truly, my Lord, my goodwill serves me to have moved such a matter as this in another direction than this is, but having more occasion to doubt of the issue of the matter, I did forbear, and in mine own conceit I could have as well liked there as in any other place in England. Percease your Lordship may guess where I mean, and so shall I, for I will name nobody. Now that the matter is determined betwixt my Lord of Oxford and me, I confess to your Lordship I do honour him so dearly from my heart as I do my own son, and in any case that may touch him for his honour and weal, I shall think him mine own interest therein. And surely, my Lord, by dealing with him I find that which I often heard of your Lordship, that there is much more in him of understanding than any stranger to him would think. And for my own part I find that whereof I take comfort in his wit and knowledge grown by good observation." (25)

Shakespeare had to labor for years before he could imitate with justice the ponderous modesty of this style.

When I copied the great politician's phrase about honoring Oxford like his son, I recalled the warmth of King Altistratus in Lawrence Twine's novel. The king affirms that he loves Apollonius no less "than if he were my natural child." There is no such declaration in Shakespeare's play. Burghley's letter to Rutland indicates the reason why. Nearly ten years after Edward de Vere entered his home as a royal ward he still seemed a stranger to Cecil, and one whose courtship of his daughter he regarded with profound misgiving. Our noble dramatist naturally made Simonides welcome the courtship of the "mean knight" Pericles, for his self-esteem, especially in youth, could not imagine a social inferior being anything but overjoyed at the proposal of alliance by wedlock with him. The play, however, confirms contemporary Court gossip that neither Oxford nor Burghley was the prime mover in the marriage. It was the clever little daughter of the statesman who captivated the Earl and persuaded her father, no doubt with the slowly won assent of Lady Mildred, her mother, that the marriage

would be a success and do credit to the house of Cecil. King Simonides is grimly amused by his girl's affirmation that she will have none for her husband but "the stranger knight."

I like that well: how absolute she's in't,
Not minding whether I dislike or no. (II, v.)

But he cannot refrain from accusing Pericles of making love to Thaisa behind his back. He denounces him as a liar and traitor, and warns him that unless the Prince frames himself to obey his dictates, he will — Do something frightful, he implies; but playfully alters his tone: he will make Pericles and Thaisa man and wife. The king's heavy joke reflects the hostility that Oxford discerned in his father-in-law, and the enmity of the dramatist toward the old man, his paternal imago, his main rival for Countess Anne's love.

In the scene of the knights' feast (II, iii) the lovers silently confront each other and the author's oral fervor manifests itself eloquently. Pericles, unable to share in the banquet, says to himself:

By Jove, I wonder, that is king of thoughts,
These cates resist me, she but thought upon.

Thaisa makes his thought explicit:

By Juno, that is queen of marriage,
All viands that I eat do seem unsavoury,
Wishing him my meat.

He devours her instead with his eyes.

After their wedding comes news of the death of Antiochus and his daughter, both stricken by lightning as they were riding in a chariot. This punishment for their "heinous capital offense" is not enough. Their shrivelled bodies are next endowed with a stench that stops charitable souls from burying them. The chariot seems to be the poet's contribution to the narrative of their fate. Perhaps he was unconsciously remembering the sight of the Lord Treasurer and Lady Anne in a coach, with the very horses that he had sent his wife from France.

In Twine's *Pattern* the report from Antioch carries with

it the proclamation that the city and its crown now belong to the Prince of Tyre. He and his queen then set sail for Antioch. Shakespeare, on the contrary, steers them to Tyre, without a word of Pericles' right to the realm of Antiochus. His protagonist is incapable of taking a crown defiled by incest and murder.

From the beginning of Act III to the end, the poetry of *Pericles* differs so magnificently from the preceding scenes that many have refused to attribute them to the same hand. A host of critics hail the last three acts for their lyric quality in Shakespeare's master vein. He transfigured the plot along with the verse. The centre of attention becomes the child of Pericles and Thaisa, the girl whom the poet named Marina because she was born at sea. The loving care which he bestowed on her story marks this part of the drama as a labor of his old age, the result of long brooding over the sorrows and responsibilities and blisses of fatherhood. Analysis of the legend of Marina would be out of place here, since our concern is with the dramatist's apprenticeship, the early passions, mistakes and fantasies that made the man called Shakespeare an artist of the stage.

We note that the Prince prays to the moon-goddess Lucina to lighten his wife's birth-pains. He appeals to Lucina with the title "Divinest patroness," making her male and female. He and Thaisa are parted in the storm — divorced, not by shipwreck, like the father and mother in *Errors*, but by the apparent death of Thaisa and its frightening effect on the sailors who wish her body thrown overboard. In the *Pattern of Painful Adventures* the hero cries distracted over his queen: "What shall I now answer to thy father for thee?" and "Would God thou haddest remained with him at home." Whatever our poet thought of these outeries he left no echo of them in his play. Thaisa is placed in a chest with spices and gems, and thrown to the waves, which transport her to the city of Ephesus, the scene of the *Comedy of Errors*. Here the gentle physician Cerimon revives her. (The portrait of Cerimon forms, in my surmise, a tribute by the poet to Dr. George Baker, who attended

Lady Oxford in illness and dedicated to her in 1576 his *New Jewel of Health*. Ten years after her death he reprinted it under the title, *The Practice of the New and Old Physic*, with the dedication changed and addressed to the Earl.) At Cerimon's advice the broken-hearted queen becomes a votaress in the temple of Diana. As Twine puts it, she joins the Ephesian moon-deity's "nuns." Among them she grows to the dignity of the abbess Aemilia in *Errors*.

Meanwhile Pericles has sailed to Tarsus, and left his baby daughter in the care of Cleon and Dionyza, whom he had befriended in their time of famine. In a hurry to make peace among the factions of Tyre he returns to his city. (Apollonius, on the other hand, turns merchant and voyages to Egypt for trade. Shakespeare could transform the merchant's son Antipholus to a warrior, but he would not condescend to have his Pericles become a business-man.) At home in Tyre the Prince, in Gower's phrase, "settled to his own desire," as if he had forgotten his daughter.

Cleon and Dionyza raise Marina with their own daughter Philoten, who looks a wretch by comparison. The jealous mother plots the foreign princess's death, but pirates arrive in time to save the girl from murder. They kidnap her to slavery. ((These rogues serve a Spaniard, "the great pirate Valdes," whose name possibly was borrowed from the Spaniard who commanded the siege of Leyden in 1574, when the Earl of Oxford sailed to see the war in the Netherlands.) King Cleon hides his wife's crime by pretending that Marina died.

I think it likely that the poet, in creating the characters of the king and queen of Tarsus, had in mind William and Mildred Cecil. When he abandoned his family in the crisis of 1576 they took charge of his girl's nursing and education. We know that between Oxford and Lady Burghley there existed a state of psychic war. He charged her with provoking contention in his household, desiring his death, and bereaving him of his wife. Drawing her as the cold-blooded Dionyza he was bound to produce a caricature, the product

of infantile fear, like the witches (dream-distorted mothers) in fairy-tales.

Marina is carried to Mitylene and sold to a brothel keeper, but she gains her freedom and makes a livelihood with her needle.

Pericles, fourteen years after his departure from Tarsus, returns to bring home his daughter. Cleon shows him her monument and the Tyrian, in dumbshow, laments, puts on sackcloth, and leaves in a mighty passion. He wanders, grieving and starving, to the harbor of Mitylene where Lysimachus, the governor, tries to help him. Marina, whom Lysimachus loves, is summoned to assist with her "sacred physic." There ensues a scene of vivid pathos in which Pericles emerges gradually from his dismal introversion to listen to the girl, and he discovers her identity. Worn out by ecstasy, with hallucination of music, he falls asleep; and the goddess Diana rises in his dream to call him to Ephesus:

Perform my bidding, or thou liv'st in woe;
Do it, and happy, by my silver bow.

He responds, "Celestial Dian, goddess argentine, I will obey thee." The goddess here represents the Queen, who had requested Oxford to let his unhappy wife come to the Court.

At Diana's temple in Ephesus, where Thaisa serves as high priestess, the hero thanks the deity for his good fortune. The scene calls up the memory of a speech in Plautus's comedy *The Glorious Soldier* which must have affected our dramatist deeply. It is the cry of joy of the slave-girl Philocomasium on her coming safe to Ephesus: "Light the fire on the altar that I may gratefully give praises and thanks to Diana of Ephesus and offer her the pleasing odor of Arabian incense. She saved me in the realms and tumultuous dwellings of Neptune, where I was so tossed about by angry waves."

Pericles announces that Marina still lives, and wears the goddess's "silver livery." Thaisa, listening, tries to speak to her husband and faints. "What means the nun?" he wonders. "She dies!" (In Twine's *Pattern* she runs

to embrace him but he thrusts her away in disdain.) At last he recognizes his lost wife. And the happy old couple go to prepare for their daughter's marriage with the governor of Mitylene.

Near the end of the play we are informed that the people of Tarsus burnt Cleon and his mate for their abominable deeds. This doom was invented by the poet to parallel the fiery death of Antiochus and his princess.

We are also told that Thaisa's father is dead. In the *Gesta Romanorum* the king of Pentapolis dies in the arms of his daughter and son-in-law. Twine gives the three a year of felicity together before Altistrates' funeral, and states that Apollonius then "applied himself to execute his father's testament." Our dramatist clearly thought this reunion one too many. He was willing to take Anne Cecil to his arms again, but to embrace her father — no. "Heavens make a star of him!" This pious wish of Pericles on learning of King Simonides' death leads me, in the light of the burning dooms of King Antiochus and King Cleon, the other surrogates of Lord Burghley, to believe that De Vere had a deep dark yearning for the extinction of his father-in-law by fire. It was certainly a consummation devoutly wished for the arch-heretic by many of the Earl's fellow Catholics, whose leaders Burghley hounded, racked, and hanged.

So our dramatist attained in dreamlike fiction the reconciliation he unconsciously wanted with his Anne. In the *Comedy of Errors* he went back in fantasy as a son to the bosom of his dead mother. This time he went as a father to her reincarnation in his wife. In reality he remained single, solitary and melancholy, sick with self-love.

The romance of *Pericles* endeavored unaware to excuse the failure of the writer to carry out his duties as husband and father. His defense amounted to three odd arguments: (1) The Countess cared more for her father than for him. (2) Affairs of state — including religious loyalties — and wild nature — the sea of sex — kept him apart from his family. (3) His child's guardians conspired to prevent him from ever seeing her. A fourth point might be added:

The Countess's father blocked the path to reunion by staying alive and powerful. Shakespeare concealed the intellectual poverty of this apology with a fabric of melodious fairy-tale (leaning heavily on his source materials) ornamented with vigorous realism and humor, to which he probably added in the sunset of his art some lines of irony and compassion for the homeless, the poor, the victims of the social order and law. He wrote the drama in moods of self-glorification and self-pity, forgetful of the artist's duty of self-criticism. Years of labored scholarship had to pass before he learnt how to argue his case in the supreme tribunal of conscience and its mimic court of the theatre with the torch of justice directed at his dear self.

Toward the end of 1576, it appears that Oxford attempted to make his wife as comfortable materially as he could, without lowering himself to beg her forgiveness. He granted her the house at Wivenhoe and lodgings at the Savoy in London. Her father said that he "promised the Queen's Majesty to be wholly advised by me" — in economic matters of course. Yet the Earl wished to make the sons of his uncle Geoffrey the inheritors of the Earldom, though the heirs of his uncle Aubrey stood next in lineage to him. Geoffrey Vere's youngsters, Francis and Horace, afterward won reputation on the battlefields of the Low Countries as two of the extraordinary soldiers of the age. Lord Burghley disliked his son-in-law's plan. It was never carried out.

In January 1577 his Lordship sent Oxford another appeal for Anne — "whose grief," he declared, "is the greater and shall always be inasmuch as her love is most fervent and addicted to you, and because she cannot or may not without offense be suffered to come to your presence, as she desireth, to offer the sacrifice of her heart." De Vere's response is unknown. In the winter of 1577, however, his sister Mary and some Protestant friends devised a method to bring him and the Countess together again, knowing he had a strong desire to see his daughter. Unfortunately we have no record of the outcome of their kind plot. (26)

On Sunday, February 17, 1577, the players of Lord

Charles Howard of Effingham, who sometimes acted as Chamberlain in the Earl of Sussex's place, presented before the Queen at Whitehall a drama entitled "The History of the Solitary Knight." The office of the Revels furnished armor, two glass vials, and bread for the performance. (27) For reasons which I trust our survey of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* has already made plain, I consider "The Solitary Knight" the first version of Shakespeare's romance.

After Lord Charles Howard became the Admiral of England, the star of his troop was the tragedian Edward Alleyn; he listed in an inventory of his costume properties (without date) a pair of spangled French hose that he used in acting "Pericles," which I take to be an older form of the romance performed years later by the Lord Chamberlain's men, Shakespeare's own company.

Dressed in the sparkling, subtle language of Shakespeare's old age, the ancient legend enraptured the aristocracy, which gladly embraced any pompous and pathetic fabrication to justify its neglect — not to mention maltreatment — of the mother country. It did the hearts of the nobility good to see a prodigal orphan of their class, after his flight from the challenge of a stern father and desertion of his people, bringing succor to a foreign folk, showing off his skill in the violence of a dead chivalry, capturing an heiress and losing both her and her child when sheltering and nourishing the family became an ordeal, yet welcomed in the end to the bosom of the mother like a long-lost beloved boy.

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NOTES

- 1 George Brandes, *William Shakespeare* (New York 1924) 582.
- 2 Quoted by W. J. Rolfe, ed. *Shakespeare's History of Pericles* (New York 1905) 14. The distinguished German critic Karl Elze shared Malone's view.
- 3 Brandes, *op. cit.* 579.

- 4 Shakespeare's Library, ed. John Payne Collier (London 1841) I, 186.
- 5 Albert H. Smyth, Shakespeare's Pericles and Apollonius of Tyre (Philadelphia 1898) 15.
- 6 Ibid. 78.
- 7 Shakespeare's Library, I, 190.
- 9 Calendar of Papal State Papers, Vol. II: Memorial of the Affairs of the Netherlands and the Queen of Scots, by Thomas Stukeley (1573). Cf. Martin Hume, The Great Lord Burghley (London 1898); G. R. Dennis, The Cecil Family (Boston, 1914).
- 10 Calendar of Rutland Manuscripts (British Public Record Office), Vol. I. Bernard M. Ward suggested that Lord Henry Howard was the author of the Treatise of Treasons (The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford; London, 1928, 131n.)
- 11 Edmund Lodge, Illustrations of British History (London 1888) Vol. I.
- 8 For my detailed investigation of the unconscious elements in The Comedy of Errors see "Shakespeare's Early Errors" in a forthcoming number of the International Journal of Psycho-Analysis.
- 12 Harleian MSS. 6991, fol. 9.
- 13 Lansdowne MSS. 14, 84, fol. 188.
- 14 Calendar of Salisbury Manuscripts, II, 68.
- 15 Cf. A. A. Brill, "Poetry as an Oral Outlet," Psychoanalytic Review, XVIII (Oct. 1931); E. Bergler, The Writer and Psychoanalysis (New York 1950) passim.
- 16 State Papers Domestic of the Reign of Elizabeth, CLI.
- 17 Tarlton's Jests, ed. Halliwell (London 1844).
- 18 Katherine E. Thomas, The Real Personages of Mother Goose (Boston 1930) 76.
- 19 Eva Turner Clark, "Through De Vere Country," Shakespeare Fellowship News-Letter, I (Aug. 1940) 3.
- 20 Freud, Wit and Its Relation to the Unconscious, in Basic Writings (New York 1938) 796.
- 21 John Stow, Annals (1590), ed. Howes (London 1615) 669.
- 22 Edward Webbe His Travels, ed. Arber (London 1868) 32.
- 23 B. M. Ward, The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, 60.
- 24 Ibid. 203. E. H. Fellowes, William Byrd (Oxford 1936) 3.
- 25 Calendar of Rutland MSS. I.
- 26 Ward, op. cit. 154-6.
- 27 Documents Relating to the Office of the Revels, ed. Feuillerat (Louvain 1908) 270. The play may have been the inspiration for the brochure "The Praise of Solitariness" which was registered in July 1577, and seems to be no longer extant.

Psychiatrist on Broadway

by

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1

The drama had its origin in sacrificial rites involving goats and scapegoats. Today it uses the psychiatrist as a scapegoat.

Yes, this plaint clatters from the typewriter of a psychiatrist. It seems to me that too often when a mental specialist walks onstage he is made the "patsy." Is he permitted to function as a diagnostician or therapist? Rarely. In play after play the psychiatrist is cast as a fool, a clown, a sadist, a devil or a deity. Sometimes he is a cartoon-like figure, held up to ridicule along with his supposedly occult science. Sometimes he is depicted as deliberately cruel or deceitful to his patients. Sometimes one sees the reflection of Trilby's Svengali, other times the shadow of the fairy Amazona, who gave a nosegay to the princess. So long as the princess had it on her person, those who knew her before could not recognize her.

Now many will argue that misrepresentation in modern drama is not reserved for psychiatrists alone. Newspaper reporters have waxed vituperatively flip about the characterizations of reporters in *The Front Page* and its successors. Ask an adolescent how he feels about the way adolescents are shown onstage, or a schoolteacher about school people, or even a Dutch uncle about Dutch uncles. The mantle of scapegoat would probably be clamored for by each.

Further, I will be reminded that a dramatist does not try to show things as they are, doesn't mirror but intensifies life. Since he must lead his audiences through exciting emo-

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tional experiences, focus attention quickly, and express capsule ideas that are readily assimilable, some of his characters have to be rather blackish and whitish.

Besides, the dissent might go on, there are many other challenging technicalities of dramatic craftsmanship like the necessity of creating tension, like the restrictions of time, place, number of characters.

Of course the problems of dramaturgy must be duly conceded. Still, the misrepresentation of psychiatrists — the glib assignment to them of unattractive roles as playwrights refuse to face up to the meaning and reality of illness of the mind — has been consistent. Too consistent. We should not be lulled by it. We should be alerted to it.

Let us examine the bill of particulars.

2

“THE PSYCHIATRIST ENTERS” looms in the stage directions of a celebrated assortment of contemporary American and English plays. Four have been Pulitzer Prize winners. Three have been voted New York Drama Critics Circle Awards. Three are among the “all-time hits” (over 800 performances) in Broadway history. Four have played to full houses simultaneously. Among their authors are some of our most eminent men of letters.

Modern plays with psychiatrists most obviously claiming attention are *The Seven Year Itch*, *The Teahouse of the August Moon*, *Oh, Men! Oh, Women!*, *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial*, *Harvey*, *The World We Make*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Curious Savage*, *The Shrike*, *Johnny Johnson*, *On Borrowed Time*, *Black Chiffon*, *The Cocktail Party*, *Blind Alley*, *The Astonished Heart*, *End of Summer*, *Lady in the Dark* and *Home of the Brave*.

Only the last two scripts contain sympathetic delineations of the psychiatrist at work. These two show a doctor truly concerned with his patient's welfare and treatment. The psychiatric smog shrouding nearly all the others successfully cloaks truths about mental disease.

It should be noted that many plays with no psychiatrist

(or early counterpart) in the cast brilliantly and honestly portray mental illness; they reach from Sophocles and Shakespeare to the works of O'Neill and Odets. But in most of the plays listed above, the psychiatrist is used by the playwright to aid in the denial of mental disease or in the services of repression: in general, by rejecting a painful reality, by negating objectionable feelings (through laughter or ridicule), the audience derives pleasure from what would otherwise be unpleasant or even intolerable. "To define true madness, what is't but to be nothing else but mad?"

3

It was in 1922, before Broadway's "Psychiatric Era," that a psychoanalyst appeared in a French play by H. R. Lenormand, *Le Mangeur des Rêves* (later known as *The Dream Doctor*). Lenormand, incidentally, was also the author of the 1923 Theatre Guild production, *The Failures*, which had Dudley Digges, Jacob Ben Ami, Winifred Lenihan and Jo Mielziner in the cast. Heraldizing the popular and professional misunderstanding of psychoanalysis in its early years, *The Dream Doctor* is a vilifying, grotesquely overdrawn attack on psychoanalysis. In it a criminally degenerate doctor alternately seduces and "treats" his patient, so that in the end the patient kills herself.

Probably the first significant American play dealing with psychoanalysis was Susan Glaspell's short comedy *Suppressed Desires*, seen in Provincetown, Massachusetts, in 1914. Miss Glaspell, also the writer of the Pulitzer Prize drama *Alison's House*, pokes fun at both insanity and psychoanalysis, at "underground desires" and the "sub-un-non-conscious mind." *Suppressed Desires* says that if you separate from your analyst it isn't necessary to separate from your spouse. As a symbol of freedom *The Journal of Morbid Psychology* is burned; twenty-two years later Hitler put the torch to Freud's contributions.

4

The Broadway psychiatrist made his trenchant debut

in the mid-Thirties. And in eighteen major plays that have since involved this specialist, all but *Lady in the Dark* and *Home of the Brave* throw stones at or laugh at the psychiatrist, telling their audiences either that there is no such thing as mental disease and insanity, or that there is no hope for the insane short of death, suicide or living death! That after all insanity is but a horrible nightmare that others may endure but from which the playwright awakens us as a mother would a frightened child, with reassurance that all is a dream and from another world.

Appearing in 1952 and still running, George Axelrod's comedy *The Seven Year Itch* (an all-time hit) portrays Richard Sherman, married seven years and vice-president in charge of sales in a firm publishing twenty-five-cent paperbacks. He has a one-night affair with the girl in the upstairs apartment. His firm is about to issue a pocket book, *Of Sex and Violence*, by a psychiatrist, Dr. Brubaker, "a round, somewhat messy, imperious man in his middle fifties," who is the quintessence of comic relief. He diagnoses his own mistaking the night of an appointment as "Repressed uxoricide. I came tonight because I wanted to murder my wife. . . A perfectly natural phenomenon. It happens every day. . . Upon leaving the clinic and being faced with the necessity of returning to my home, I felt a strong unconscious impulse to murder my wife. Naturally, not wanting to do the good woman any bodily harm, my mind conveniently changed our appointment to tonight. What could be more simple?" Funnyman medico—not essential to the play's main action—brings laughter as he condones and even gives advice for the accomplishment of what one critic called "a slight case of adultery."

Late in 1953 John Patrick's *The Teahouse of the August Moon* (winner of the Drama Critics Circle annual Award for the "best new play written by an American and produced in New York") came to Broadway with a psychiatrist in the cast of characters as ineffectual as the one in the author's earlier *The Curious Savage*, to be probed later. A dramatization of Vern Sneider's novel, the play tells of the

efforts of the U. S. Occupation Forces to convert the natives of an Okinawan village to "enlightened" Western ways. When the Army captain commanding this mission falls under the native spell, an Army psychiatrist is dispatched to investigate the officer. Like the captain, he immediately goes native. It seems he is not a psychiatrist at heart but a gardener with a consuming interest in compost and worms. "We're going to need plenty of manure," he tells the astonished colonel who is expecting a formal psychiatric report. The psychiatrist is an intimidated victim of red tape who knows a good escape when he sees one.

Oh, Men! Oh, Women! (1954) by Edward Chodorov recently illuminated Broadway for 382 performances. *Life* devoted three pages of pictures to the "comedy on the couch" in which a psychoanalyst copes with his own love life. The magazine called it "Broadway's most complete compendium of modern sexual lore." *The Saturday Review* described it as a "mixture of high farce and a pseudo-scientific discussion of the function of psychoanalysis in relation to marital problems in our society," and added that it contained a scathing attack on psychoanalysis.

"I don't need a psychoanalyst, I need help!" moans one overwrought character. Another, in the words of Walter F. Kerr of *The New York Herald Tribune*, "has a very peculiar relation with reality (she dismisses it)." This is the female the psychoanalyst chooses to marry.

To the delight of the playgoers the specialist in human behavior is bewildered, befuddled and bewitched. To be sure, in a very funny way for it is a caricature. Both patients and doctor are in the same boat, literally.

The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial (runner-up for the 1953-1954 Drama Critics Circle American Award) reveals the chaos resulting when naval officers become amateur psychiatrists. In the taut trial of Captain Queeg, the two professional psychiatrists called to testify add nothing to human understanding and give a certain amount of audience pleasure by being bested by a shrewd lawyer. The playgoer is treated to the entertainment of seeing the professionals

trapped in their own testimony. Their stature as experts of the mind must be cast in doubt in order to win the acquittal.

During the cross-examination of one psychiatrist, the denial of mental illness is placed in his mouth. In an incredible deception, Lt. Greenwald, the defense attorney, asks, "Doctor, you have special training in Freudian technique?" (Dr. Bird): "Yes." (Greenwald): "In the Freudian analysis is there such a thing as mental illness?" (Dr. Bird): "Well, there are disturbed people and adjusted people." Thus, analysis is falsely invoked to deny mental illness. The psychiatrist becomes offended and angry, "looking like an insulted boy," who refuses to use the word *sick* because it is, as he says, a "polarized word."

5

Eight earlier plays deal with the question of the sanity of the principal character. They fall into two groups. Three — *Harvey*, *The World We Make* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* — depict a manifestly insane persons. Five are concerned with a mentally disturbed protagonist who the play specifically denies is really insane (*The Curious Savage*, *The Shrike*, *Johnny Johnson*, *On Borrowed Time*, *Black Chiffon*). In these the theme is approximately that the sane are crazy and the insane are sane.

The best example of the dramatic denial of insanity using an insane person is Mary Chase's *Harvey* (1944) with its whimsical, alcoholic Elwood P. Dowd and his hallucinatory six-foot rabbit. The play ranks sixth among Broadway's all-time hits, with 1,775 performances. Madeap and enchanting, it allows its audience to laugh at insanity. Its success is dependent upon this device. The commandment is Thou Durst Not Look Behind the Mask. Before the final curtain, nearly everyone has "seen" the rabbit and been transported into the wonderful make-believe world. The spell would have been broken instantly had Elwood been deprived of his hallucination and restored to health by the psychiatrist. The comical Dr. Chumley has godlike powers

in the possession of a magic medicine, one injection of which would cure Elwood. This pompous, ridiculous psychiatrist eventually shares Elwood's hallucination. He is discredited and his services rejected so that the world of fantasy can triumph.

The incompetent and brutal "madhouse" is known as "Chumley's Rest." A troglodyte attendant threatens to "knock the teeth" down Elwood's throat, is ever anxious to use the straitjacket, springs from behind a tree to beat up and incarcerate Elwood's sister who is mistaken for a patient. Any legal redress on her part would have broken the spell by ringing in reality.

Harvey touches upon two significant conceptions in the popular history of insanity. First, violence has from earliest times been linked with insanity. By creating a hero who is non-violence incarnate, Mrs. Chase eliminates its most frightening aspect. She lets us doubt that such a gentle person as Elwood can really be insane. Second, in early times the insane were thought to be exculpable because they were possessed by demons. If their behavior was disturbing, cruel punishment was permissible because they were not considered human by virtue of the possession. Indeed the witch doctor justified his punishment as a means of driving out the evil spirits. Nowadays a person declared insane is deprived of his civil rights and is therefore a sub-citizen. This, together with the fears historically evoked by disturbed persons, accounts for many brutalities. In this light it is interesting that while threats are made against the unobtrusive Elwood they are carried out only against his sister; a substitute is provided.

Harvey was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, which is bestowed on "an original American play, performed in New York, which shall represent in marked fashion the educational [sic] value and power of the stage, preferably dealing with American life."

In *The World We Make* (1939, 80 New York performances) Sidney Kingsley dramatized Millen Brand's novel *The Outward Room*. A wealthy insane girl escapes from

a sanatorium, finds work in the slums, and finally regains her sanity when she witnesses her lover's futile grief over the death of his brother. This play, upholding love, courage and hope, says that only through faith in people and their goodness can we find strength to go on in a troubled world. But it implies something deeper: that the insane will be cured not by psychiatrists nor in mental hospitals but by running away from them.

Though we do not dispute the importance of love and faith, this girl's cure is a sham and a convenient device. Here the kindly psychiatrist is neither God nor the Devil; he is merely powerless. In the final act he confesses to his former patient his own humiliations and suffering to validate the moralistic theme. It is Kingsley's *Dead End* in reverse, a social drama of prewar anxiety and search for meaning in the face of impending chaos.

The third play with a real patient, also in a slum setting, is Tennessee Williams' violent and superb *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947, 855 performances — an all-time hit). While the psychiatrist has only a bit part at the end, his role heightens the denouement. He plays the traditional man in white who comes knocking at the door. No questions asked, no explanations, no interview, no examination — just a sort of "come-along-now" policeman psychiatry. The program identifies him only as "A Strange Man." He is accompanied by an attendant, "A Strange Woman," who seizes the disintegrating Blanche, pinions her arms and forces her to the floor, then asks the doctor if a straitjacket should be used. When Blanche no longer can cope with reality, she is carted off on demand, for we can no more face Blanche than insanity. This disposition is the "solution" to the struggle portrayed.

Mr. Williams received both the Pulitzer Prize and New York Drama Critics Circle Award for *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

6

Now for the five plays that elaborate on the notion that

the principal character is a sane person in the guise of an insane one.

The Curious Savage (1950, 31 performances — a comparatively short run) by John Patrick contains this revealing foreword to the actors: "It is important in *The Curious Savage* that the gentle inmates of 'The Cloisters' be played with warmth and dignity. Their 'Home' is not an 'asylum' nor are these good people 'lunatics.' Any exaggeration of roles will rob them of charm and humor. The whole point of the play is to contrast them with Mrs. Savage's children and the insane outside world. . ."

The psychiatrist is a cipher, running a custodial, country-club-like institution for kind, cooperative and rich patients. I suppose he is more related to the inmates than the outmates. The sane Mrs. Savage does not contest her incarceration, which allows her special privileges in forcing her children to do crazy things. At the end she leaves the euphemistically designated Cloisters with the psychiatrist's mawkish blessing: "Make your peace with loneliness." At the final curtain there is a blackout followed by a momentary glimpse of the inmates' blissful, gossamer, pantomime world of hallucination.

Time's critic caught the "tempting and dangerous theme" of the play. *Newsweek* found it "a strange dish to set before an audience . . . and just how amusing one finds insanity is very much a matter of taste."

Broadway's menu has had many offerings of goose contrived to look like pheasant, but none more transparent than this. *The Curious Savage* represents patients and a sanatorium as the exact opposite of what we fear they really are. Here the inmates are kind, gentle, good people at a party presided over by the *maitre d'hospice*. This is one way of denying what is unacceptable and dangerous: disguise it in the cloak of extreme affection. Like killing with kindness.

The Shrike (1952, 161 performances) by Joseph Kramm tells the weighty story of an unemployed Broadway director who attempts suicide only to find himself forcibly incarcerated in a mental ward staffed by sadists. As the play be-

gins, Jim Downs is wheeled into the psychopathic ward of a metropolitan hospital, semi-conscious from an overdose of phenobarbital. The physician on the ward treats the patient with intravenous medication and a stomach tube. The physician, who is not a psychiatrist, who actually treats the patient is called Dr. Kramer. It seems to me that:

Ups and downs has poor Jim Downs,
Says Mr. Kramm,
But Dr. Kramer brings
What Jim downs up.

Jim tells each specialist that he has taken 156 phenobarbital pills, and each in turn makes him state he counted them. The first psychiatrist's reaction to this information is a flat "That's impossible." No one ever thinks to ask Jim the important question: how *strong* were the pills — one-eighth grain or up to five grains? A hundred and fifty-six pills of one-quarter-grain strength would equal only thirty-nine one-grain pills.

The three psychiatrists are credulous, misjudging, witless numskulls who were thought by Wolcott Gibbs of *The New Yorker* to be unequipped to practice in the Congo. They "think [Jim] sounds rational," but defer to his wife, who tells them that "once in a while he'll say something wild and incoherent." Just what, she cannot remember. All the sympathy of the staff is squandered on The Shrike herself.

As a Broadway director Jim must be credited with a modicum of sophistication and up-to-date information about psychiatry; at one point he assures a psychiatrist that he is not manic-depressive. Now anyone with eyes and ears can see enormous barred windows and hear locking and unlocking doors; yet it takes Jim six days to notice that he is in the "psycho building," realization coming only after enlightenment by a fellow patient. Jim comments, "It never occurred to me." That such a preposterous thing could be credibly carried off attests to the hypnotic effect of the play.

There are three ways out of this ward: commitment to the state hospital, apparently a worse fate; punitive as-

signment to the violent ward with its straitjackets; and lastly, return to society uncured by feigning recovery. Faced with this trio of disheartening choices, Jim plays the "model" patient and deceives the psychiatrists. His progress toward recovery is duly observed when he play ping-pong.

After two weeks' incarceration he is finally maneuvered into saying he is cured and needs no more help. In fact, an essential point in the ending is that the psychiatrists are in cahoots with Jim's wife to see to it that he receives no treatment after leaving the hospital; for this might leave the audience with a vague feeling of hope for Jim. It becomes clear that the author's story is of a man as much a prisoner outside as inside the hospital.

So emotionally moving was the production that one critic noted the audience's genuine spontaneous hissing of the wife, and added, "I can't recall having heard anything like that in the modern theatre." George Jean Nathan commented on the play as a "documentary diatribe against hospitals for the mentally deranged. It has some occasional dramatic force, but on the whole is too literally written and too arbitrary to be convincing." What is painfully convincing is not the state of our mental institutions but the *horror of illegal imprisonment.*

Unjustified incarceration in a mental hospital was a scandalous situation 200 years ago when there were no statutory provisions for commitment. For over half a century there has been increasingly strict regulation of certification of the insane. Even Jim Downs would know that he had the legal right to prove his sanity; he does not fight for his real freedom, choosing instead to propitiate his guilt by a life of suffering and atonement with his she-devil of a wife. This is a critical point, for a deeply moving, hidden current in this play involves the price a man pays for committing a socially "sinful" act, and how his guilt compounds his suffering by making him more afraid to fight for his "rights" and his freedom. In another society (Japan) the act of suicide might be considered the recourse of courage and sanity.

When a man fails to protect himself, his own weakness may be comfortably replaced by the more acceptable substitute of the weakness and cruelty of his jailers or his judges. It is as if a man on trial for his life pleads guilty when he is innocent. Jim Downs is a collaborator of his keepers (he decides against seeing the girl he loves when so advised; he agrees not to call in an outside psychiatrist; he refuses to demand legal counsel and to fight his illegal incarceration; in the end he plays the game completely). This is, I am sure, an essential part of the hero's neurosis which led to his suicide attempt. But his weakness, his passivity, his frustrated rage are utilized by the playwright to accentuate the institutional cruelty. That is the playwright's choice, but it is also the play's enduring weakness. It is also a smoke screen for the question the play never answers: is a man who tries to kill himself mentally ill?

One is led to believe that Jim's wife can have him committed to a state hospital or forthwith discharged from the city hospital, as she wishes. She is told by the psychiatrists that the law is entirely on her side. Because of our deep regard for civil liberties, no crisis is more absorbing than that of a person being deprived of liberty without due process of law. Hence *The Shrike*, dealing with a purportedly sane person, carries a powerful message — albeit a distorted one — about mental illness and mental institutions. Had the fact of Jim's mental illness (as distinct from legal insanity) or his need for psychiatric treatment outside the hospital even been acknowledged, it would have been a different and an honest play.

Henry Hewes, praising the play in *The Saturday Review*, quotes Kramm: "One of the things I'm proudest of in this play is that I have not distorted or deliberately disparaged anything about mental hospitals or psychiatrists." It is unfortunate that *The Shrike*, portraying one abysmal hospital situation, seems wittingly to have been designed to describe mental hospitals and psychiatrists in general. And therein lies the evil: this is the image of contemporary psychiatry presented to the public. Yet, in actuality, the

shame of our mental institutions stands not in the incarceration of sane people but in the perforced neglect and regimentation — for lack of trained help — of rows upon rows of sick human beings put away in them.

The awarding of the Pulitzer Prize to *The Shrike* met with mixed reaction from the drama critics. Richard McLaughlin wrote in *Theatre Arts*: "It must be that the Pulitzer Prize went to *The Shrike* by default; there was no other play purporting to be serious that was worth a second look. But the motives of award committee are unpredictable. . ." Had Mr. McLaughlin considered the types of psychiatric play lately commended by the Pulitzer committee, he might have found its bent more predictable. In 1945 its award went to *Harvey*, in 1948 to *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Thus, in three Pulitzer plays we are asked not to look at mental disease: in *Harvey* to laugh at it; in *Streetcar* to whisk it out of sight; in *The Shrike* to ignore the fact of mental disease and pity the dilemma of a "sane" man.

6

Paul Green's musical fantasy *Johnny Johnson* (1936, 68 New York performances, runner-up for the Drama Critics Circle American Award) with score by Kurt Weill concerns a homespun American tombstone engraver who joins the Army to Make the World Safe for Democracy. Disillusioned and shot in the behind, he escapes from the casualty hospital and with the aid of laughing-gas temporarily succeeds in persuading the General Staff to call off World War I. When reality prevails, the slaughter is resumed and we find the sane Johnny locked up in an asylum. The psychiatrist in charge is presumably insane (as in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*). Unable to remember Johnny's name, he says, " 'I think you'll make a very interesting patient, Mr. — er —' (*Blankly, then getting the answer*) 'Mr. Mahodan.' " (the doctor's own name and onomatopoetically suggesting madman). In the asylum we find the sane; outside it the insane. The dismal denouement has poor sane Johnny, now old, broken and

unhappy, discharged from the hospital and peddling toys on the street.

Paul Osborn's delightful hit *On Borrowed Time* (1938, 161 New York performances, revived 1953, 78 performances) is an adaptation of Lawrence Edward Watkins whimsical novel. The theme is the "undying" protection of and affection for a boy by an old man. Gramps gets Death up a tree and no one in the world can die; the dramatist makes this hallucination real. Again the sane are cruel, the insane kind. Gramps and the boy are threatened by the unscrupulous, avaricious Demetria (dementia?). Gramps is to be committed to the local asylum by a vicious psychiatrist known simply as "Mr." Grimes, whose surname should begin with the third instead of the seventh letter of the alphabet. Enter Mr. Grimes; he utters forty-five words in four speeches and turns in exasperation to his patient: "Oh, what the hell's the use? Now try to get this straight, will you? I'm taking you to the state insane asylum!" "There ain't nothin' wrong with me, Mr. Grimes," maintains Gramps, but Mr. Grimes snarls, "Now, are you coming along like a good fellow or do I have to put a straitjacket on you?" The audience is not disappointed when the old man shoots Mr. Grimes. Gramps and his grandson both die at the end, united and safe, fulfilling life's promise and death's mission. And note once again the scapegoat role of the psychiatrist.

In *Black Chiffon* (1950, 109 performances) by Lesley Storm, a middleclass English mother "with a fastidious mind and an eager heart," compelled by an unconscious wish to prevent her son's marriage, steals a chiffon nightgown from a lingerie counter and must stand trial. A psychiatrist, Dr. Hawkins, is called in. The mother, not the psychiatrist, points out that people will misunderstand his proposed defense based on the love tie between mother and son. What the psychiatrist has to offer is infinitely more disgraceful than imprisonment for a minor crime. The proud woman does not hesitate; she tells the doctor she will deny his defense with her whole strength. Whereupon Dr. Hawkins, helpless before her indisputable logic and wisdom, imme-

diately announces he is "at her feet." And so she is sentenced to jail with relative respectability. This touching play comes closest to spelling out the need for refusal to face mental illness: the world misunderstands what it cannot accept and so we suffer — but in denying, suffer less.

7

In T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* (1950, 409 performances, winner of the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for the "best foreign play of the season") the playwright sends four main characters to a specialist. That all four should voluntarily visit the office of Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly would on the surface seem a new note. However, Sir Henry is no psychiatrist after all! While other playwrights have written of the psychiatrist portrayed as God-like, Mr. Eliot wrote of God in the person of a psychiatrist — the embodiment of omniscience. The deity theme was variously perceived by New York critics. The characters in the play, though, repeatedly refer to him as the devil or a lunatic practical joker. When Celia speaks of him as the Devil, it is capitalized. When Lavinia, the party-giver, does, it is a lower-case devil. Two orders of devil.

We can understand *The Cocktail Party* as a psychiatric play only if we begin by assuming that this sophisticated drama is not about psychiatry at all but is a deeply religious story given us as a first-rate comedy of manners. The play never preaches but this is does say: illusion must be dropped and reality faced. In most psychiatric plays we have found clinging to illusion to mitigate the fact of mental disease. The philosophical, highly rational and cultivated Mr. Eliot has no truck with mental disease and therefore needs no illusion.

One must, he says, make a decision:

"Neither way is better.

Both ways are necessary. It is also necessary

To make a choice between them."

The alternatives are to make the best of a bad job and give good cocktail parties or go to the "sanatorium," becoming

a saint through martyrdom. Two orders of people. To the former the "psychiatrist" offers adjustment through acceptance by removing illusion; to the latter he offers salvation. I agree with Robert Coleman that *The Cocktail Party* is one of the great plays of our time, and with Mr. W. R. Garrison (*Christian Century*) who said, "The 'message' has a Delphic indefiniteness that must leave the patrons with no uncomfortable sense of having been preached at and yet with the slightly awed feeling of having heard oracular words. . ."

The play is full of magnificent poetry but the meaning is often so obscure it must be combed from the text. Sir Henry says to Edward:

"When you find, Mr. Chamberlayne,
The best of a bad job is all any of us make of it —
Except, of course, the saints — such as those who go
To the sanatorium — you will forget this phrase,
And in forgetting it will alter the condition."

With these words the husband and wife are reconciled to their life and are sent off by Sir Henry with the benediction, "Go in peace. And work out your salvation with diligence." Exhausted, the doctor lies down on his couch. Celia, who chooses atonement, goes to the sanatorium, enters a nursing order in Africa, attends the Christian natives sick with plague, and meets her end by being crucified very near an ant hill. The news of Celia's death is accompanied by the beginning of a cocktail party as the curtain falls. What the audience has seen is a renunciation.

Eliot's emphasis is on the alternatives of faith and ab-solution or strong advice from an authoritative father. Sir Henry is assisted by his two secret colleagues — perhaps in some sort of holy trinity. The power of *The Cocktail Party* stems from its handsome poetic writing and its mystical religious appeal. It tells us that mental illness can be cured in the lesser among us by machinations and in the nobler spirits by faith, and if these be illusions, they are the only ones permitted us. Mr. Eliot has now said that he based his play upon the Alcestis myth and that he is surprised no

critic guessed this. After rereading the Alcestis myth, I am surprised at Mr. Eliot's surprise.

8

In James Warwick's slick, tense *Blind Alley* (1935, 119 New York performances) Dr. Shelby, a professor of psychology, plays psychiatrist. His home is taken over by a notorious gunman, a bush-league Dillinger, as a hide-out. By a forty-eight-hour parlor psychoanalysis, the professor manages to drive the criminal to the point of insanity. (In *Johnny Johnson*, "Dr. Frewd" accomplishes an analysis by a pantomime lasting mere seconds.) Mr. Warwick's tale is a vengeful, sadistic exposure of the gunman's unconscious life and unhappy childhood. The doctor concludes his interviews on this note: "That mental picture of yourself . . . has destroyed you just as surely as though I had blown your brains out. . . There's just one thing left for you to do." The gunman goes into the next room and shoots himself. In the play's last line, superwizard professor exclaims with appropriate insight, "God! I feel like a murderer myself."

In Noel Coward's one-act play *The Astonished Heart* (1936, 118 New York performances as part of the show *Tonight at 8.30*) the playwright himself acted the leading role of "one of the most famous psychiatrists in the world" who has a love affair with his wife's friend. Much of the play's dramatic appeal undoubtedly lies in its depiction of a specialist who, like his patients, can crumble and crack up when trying to cope with personal problems. A glimpse into the private life of a psychiatrist so vulnerable to human strain is reassuring to the playgoer, who then no longer need fear that there are magical and supernatural powers possessed by the expert.

To his love the doctor says, ". . . you're a sane, thrilling animal without complications, and the fact that my life has been broken on your loveliness isn't your fault. I don't believe it's even mine — it's an act of God, darling, like fire and wind and pestilence. You're in on a grand tragedy, the best tragedy of all, and the best joke, the triumphant,

inevitable defeat of mind by matter?" In the end the psychiatrist kills himself by jumping out a window.

That same year S. N. Behrman's *End of Summer* (1936, 137 performances) showed a psychoanalyst, Dr. Kenneth Rice, as greedy, unscrupulous and quite insensitive. Apologetic for his profession, he is a straw man for the author. In the final scene, Dr. Rice (who has been courting his wealthy hostess) confesses to her daughter that it is *she* whom he loves, and asks the girl, "Do you think me insane?" With merciful brevity she replies "Yes." All ends happily with the rejected doctor packing his bags.

9

Now to *Home of the Brave* and *Lady in the Dark*. These two plays, with their sympathetic portrayals of a psychiatrist at work, seem to be mutants in the evolution of psychiatric drama. They have neither ancestors nor as yet descendants in the family tree. Interestingly enough, one just preceded and one just followed our involvement in the Second World War.

By the time Arthur Laurents' *Home of the Brave* (1945, 69 performances) arrived, the public was well informed of the benefits of psychiatry in the armed forces. Set in a remote South Pacific Army hospital, the play dramatizes a psychiatric cure in a guilt-ridden soldier hero (Jewish, though a Negro in the movie version). Pvt. Peter Coen has had to leave his dying buddy on an enemy-infested island. Believing he is responsible for the death, Coney loses the power of his legs. The Army psychiatrist, Dr. Bitterger, is sensitive and empathetic and talks without any mumbo jumbo about sex urges. By use of intravenous sodium amytal he enables his patient to abreact the traumatic events that precipitated his symptoms. Remembering and relinquishing unreal guilt, Coney recovers.

This powerful play offers hope without ignoring any of the violence and evil in the world. The hero is the butt of prejudice and discrimination and is the victim of his unconscious self-punishment. In the denouement, the relief

of Coney's guilt complex also relieves the audience's sense of guilt. The play says to the onlookers: You are not as bad as you think you are.

Critics were divided. Some hailed it as the "best drama yet on World War II," and "by long odds the finest drama of the season. . . obvious candidate for the Pulitzer Prize." It met with box-office success, demonstrating that audiences are receptive to empathetic portrayal of psychiatrists. Seemingly headed for a long run, it closed when the theatre lease was terminated.

Perhaps the audience is able to fasten on *Home of the Brave's* faraway military setting to achieve a comforting illusion of non-reality, or denial. At least here is no aspect of ordinary life. Nevertheless, the play has its very basis in the recall of repressed memories. It is the most clinical of the psychiatric plays and does not err in this respect.

Moss Hart directed his own musical hit *Lady in the Dark* (1941, interrupted run totaling 467 New York performances). This work is indeed an inspired tour de force about psychiatry. Moreover, a cure is accomplished by psychoanalysis and the play does not require the audience to laugh at either sufferer or doctor. It was an extravagantly lovely production, enhanced by Ira Gershwin's lyrics and Kurt Weill's music. The psychiatric aspects, with allowance for artistic license and condensation of time, are faithful and authentic. *Lady in the Dark* reveals the inner conflicts of a gifted, beautiful woman who consults the doctor because she wants to get well. *Mirabile dictu*: the doctor's office is bright and cheerful. The analyst has a "strongly-lined, good-humored face." He smiles, is a gentleman, is completely professional and genuinely interested in his patient's recovery!

Liza Elliott is crumbling at the height of her success as editor of a fashionable woman's magazine; every successful moment in her career had merely added to her burden of frustration. Her affair with her publisher-employer reaches a critical point when he is about to divorce his wife and Liza realizes she does not want him. Liza's dreams and fantasies

come to life and she plays out her problem against her images of three suitors. The doctor's words are simple, direct comments that anyone can understand:

"I wonder," he says to her, "if your scorn and hatred of other women is because you are afraid of them. You make them beautiful to appease them, but the more beautiful you make them the more they continue to rob you, and your hate and fear of them grows. Perhaps the reason for the way you dress is that it is a kind of protective armor — with it you are not forced to compete. You don't dare." Note that he "wonders" and suggests that "perhaps" this is true; he is no clairvoyant. No comic opera doctor or diabolic Svengali here; no smutty, clever, sexually titillating lines; no talk of incest, no moralizing — yet no disguising. The theatre had come a long way since the German Wedekind's first assault on sexual taboos in his tragedy of adolescence *The Awakening of Spring*, in 1898.

In lieu of denial of mental illness, *Lady in the Dark* offers the audience two special pleasurable compensations. It can readily identify with the heroine — who has attained a peak of commercial success in a female Horatio Alger legend — and then she is shown renouncing her exalted position in favor of love and greater rewards of self-understanding. To the playgoer this says: Don't feel sad; there is something more important than the glitter and shams of material power. Also, when Liza surrenders her post to the man she loves, many men enjoy the overthrow of a matriarchal order and many women are pleased who wish for more dominance by their men; more simply, Liza is now seen really loving and loved.

Forbidden impulses are acted out for the beholder in rococo fantasies presented as dreams. Thus the spectator can enjoy the "real" story and at the same time shrug off the "unreal" one, or doubt it, as he needs. The critic for *The New York Sun* found his mind balking at what he called "the fundamental discrepancies between bright fantasy and mental disturbance . . . but . . . we can worry about the sincerity of stories some other time." Other critics too were

obviously disturbed by and unprepared for a favorable Freudian slant. Richard Watts, Jr. wrote in *The New York Herald Tribune* that this "celebrated musical play is said to be Moss Hart's paean to his psychoanalyst. The emotional power is by no means overwhelming and its propaganda for the soul-curing virtues of psychoanalysis is rather on the primitive side. As a feat of showmanship it is unquestionably brilliant." While praising the play, these critics felt the need to label it as propaganda and to doubt its sincerity. It had to be accepted for the glitter and rejected for the essence. John Mason Brown told *New York Post* readers that it "boasts virtues as a production which are as difficult to overestimate as it is hard to underestimate the seriousness with which it deserves to be taken as a literary drama."

Although *Lady in the Dark* shed an expected light in abysmal psychiatric gloom, the hope it offered was short-lived. It was followed in war year 1944 by *Harvey* and — except for *Home of the Brave* — by a decade-long parade of puppet psychiatrists.

10

It is not for me to protest that the psychiatrists should have been portrayed differently in these many plays. But it would indubitably be far more realistic and probably healthier for our society — with over half our hospital beds occupied by mental patients — if the psychiatrist were not used dramatically to foster the illusion that there is no such thing as mental illness.

There is such a thing. Scapegoats — denials — cannot erase it. The need for denial, the fear of mental disease, has never been more dramatically put than in Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, when Hermes speaks:

"Such words and thoughts from one
Brain-stricken one may hear.
What space divided his state
From frenzy? What repost
Hath he from maddened rage?
But ye who pitying stand

And share his bitter griefs,
Quickly from hence depart,
Lest the relentless roar
Of thunder stun your soul."

510 Byron
Palo Alto, Calif.

Saturday's Psychiatrist

*Comments on references to psychiatry and psychoanalysis
in the Saturday Review of Literature during one year*

by

Harry A. Wilmer, M.D., Ph.D.*

"Adultery, race problems, war, Communism and Freud, not altogether fraudulently presented, raise their seldom lovely heads in even the most discreet magazines and books. . ." a *Saturday Review* novel critic wrote in 1953. I wondered about this grouping of "evils," why this gratuitous gesture to Freud "not altogether fraudulently presented." How often in these pages do psychiatry and psychoanalysis get the back of the hand, how often the open hand of friendliness?

Being a psychiatrist and analyst, I was more than casually interested. I collected all the references to my field in the 1953 issues of the magazine. They numbered just over seventy. They should, I thought, give a fairly good cross-section of book and play reviewers' attitudes toward this new science and what psychiatric and psychologic subjects can expect at the hands of professional critics. Unlike many popular magazines, incidentally, psychiatry is not "defused" by jokes and cartoons in *Saturday Review*. In my clipping collection I found only one cartoon obliquely having anything to do with the subject, and only four jokes by one columnist. I put the clippings into four arbitrary categories: 1. Condescension and Exasperation; 2. Word-Freud and Word-Psychoanalysis; 3. Psychiatry and the Patient; 4. Criticism by Psychiatrists, Analysts and Psychologist-Philosophers.

2.

Condescension and Exasperation: one can often feel the

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warm breath of the reviewer's sighs. Take the critic who begins a review of a novel portraying childhood by saying, "... Tired of iron men and iron curtains? Had your fill of psychiatrists?" An interesting gimmick. No doubt about the appeal of the word *psychoanalysis* as a come-on: "When Englishmen take to psychoanalyzing a Frenchman one lends an attentive ear." Why? Clever, but then ... those Frenchmen! Judging by the questionable worth of many books purporting to deal with psychiatrists, I can understand the reaction.

Another reviewer is more explicit. He begins: "It is reassuring in an age where the maternal tie is regarded with distrust and suspicion; when thanks [sic] to psychiatrists, every [sic] mother thinks of the silver cord in about the same light as the hangman's noose, to find something admirable, something permanent and strong can come out of this relationship." One can hardly thank the psychiatrist for popular misunderstanding and misconception of what he says and knows; or by *reductio ad absurdum* rejoice that he is wrong after all. Mother comes in for her justifiable defense because the psychiatrist has said naughty things about her.

What about all the technical words in the science of psychology and psychiatry and psychoanalysis? The critic, of course, under his professional immunity has recourse to them all, often revealing not the slightest understanding of what the terms really mean. Like Lewis Carroll's Alice, he is the Master of the Word. Too bad, yet these words have become part of colloquial language in their distorted meanings. Literary critics rarely hesitate to apply such words as *psychologic* or *neurotic* to something they are writing about. The terms *fixation*, *obsession*, *psychopath*, *libidinous musings*, *subconscious guilt* are all commonly misapplied. Nevertheless, the professional critic owes it to his reader and to book buyers to have a good psychiatric dictionary at hand if he is going to use technical terms. One critic speaks of "the naturalness of incest, matricide, adultery, cruelty, sui-

cide . . ." Aha! whispers the reader to himself, who's to blame for all this nonsense?

There is a regrettable tendency common among psychiatrists as well as critics to apply specific psychiatric terms to things to which the terms do not refer at all: to societies, to history, to countries, to trends. It may be felt to be above reproach because it is merely a "literary allusion." One reviewer says, "If suburbia has a neurosis it is the fear of being neurotic." Sounds good but what does it mean? Another quotes from a book he has judged: "There is scarcely a peak that has not been scaled, or a tribe that has not been filmed and psychoanalyzed."—a neat way of getting a point across, i.e. exasperation, even though the statement is fantastic. "A term," says Bridgman, "is defined when a condition is stated under which I may use the term and when I may infer from the use of the term by my neighbor that the same conditions prevail."

3.

In the *Word-Freud and Word-Psychoanalysis* category no holds are barred. All's fair in war and Freud. We are told in the essay "The Books Which Changed America" that "[In] Sigmund Freud's 'The Interpretation of Dreams' (published in 1900, translated in 1913), the most widely read of Freud's books in the United States, [is the] beginning [of] the seepage into American thinking of this corrosive of the rational man." Seepage, corrosive . . . who likes to think of man as not rational? Yet Freud's contribution to the understanding of irrationality and to the meaning of rationalization were new beginnings in science in helping the mentally ill.

Reappearing again and again is the image of Freud: "We have thumped out political tracts, and burrowed with Freud"; "Freud revealed dark human impulses that Marx attributed to environment"; "the turgid stream of psychoanalysis". There are too many to quote them all. Graham Greene, we learn, is "almost naively Freudian in his frame-

work . . . even [the heroine] has a simple enough Oedipus complex . . ."

A critic is justifiably distressed that "the chapters on Crane and Norris snag badly on Oedipus and castration theories. Influenced too much by John Berryman's pseudo-Freudian diagnosis of Crane in a recent and misleading biography . . . the biographer must avoid the easy, the trite, the doctrinaire solution that would fix all human motivation on a classic character named Oedipus." But while Oedipus is ubiquitous, Freud never said nor did he imply that all human motivation was fixed on this complex. It is not that I take exception to the reviewer's compulsion, but I wondered when I would come across a non-psychiatric critic who had a good word for the non-pseudo-Freud and the Gentleman from Greece.

Freud and psychoanalysis are not without their objective evaluators in *Saturday Review*. In reviewing a novel, one man says that the author "coolly violates Freudian theory in order to impose a doctrinaire solution, while simultaneously availing himself of a psychiatric symbology and dream interpretation when it serves his turn. Despite this rather questionable juggling . . ."

Many present-day critics and writers have lived through the emergence of psychoanalysis, have observed its initially vicious and hostile reception and its slow acceptance. In earlier days, but less so now, the Word-Freud evoked reactions not unlike Tchaikowsky's remarks on Brahms: "I played over the music of the scoundrel Brahms. What a giftless bastard." Word-Psychoanalysis still conjures from the half informed, comments like that of the sedate *Boston Transcript* about Tchaikowsky's "Pathetique" Symphony in 1898: "It threads all the foul ditches and sewers of human despair; it is as unclean as music can be." Probably another few decades will pass before we settle down to a clearer understanding of Freud's contributions, his great advances, as well as his errors and mistakes.

4.

The psychiatrist receives some kudos for helping dramatic artists: "His Iago bewilders audiences who expected the usual sinister Schemer, because [Sir Lawrence] Olivier had worked out the part according to a theory advanced by Freud's friend Dr. Ernest Jones." And this: "Miss Sarah Churchill manages somehow, in the role of Ophelia, to render the usually embarrassing 'mad' scene with conviction . . . by boldly pruning and by clever substitution of the flavor of psychiatry for the antique straws, flowers and ballads."

In praising an author for his psychologic insight, one critic points out that the story is told "largely in terms of people who might come through one's own front door rather than the nearest psychiatrist's." Perhaps he would be surprised. Another comments gratuitously: "We are now apt to catch them young and turn them over to the psychiatrist or the reform school." If I were a resentful man I would resent the association. But it goes deeper than that: the critics are saying in essence that it is not the ordinary people who see a psychiatrist — ergo possibly reader and critic — but the "madman" and the criminal. This may have been true fifty years ago; today it is a half truth.

It is reassuring to read a critic's exasperation at a ridiculous "psychiatric" television show about an old man who had a "psychologic block" (meaning what the author wants it to mean) and can't get out of his study's unlocked doors because he never had any marbles as a little boy.

A recurring "psychiatric" theme in literature is caught and nailed for its true meaning. The story, says the reviewer, ". . . manages, in its small way, to deal a below-the-belt blow to psychiatric practice. . . . An 'advanced' psychiatrist allows said patient to escape Mething Sanatorium, as he believes they have a better chance of regaining their sanity in 'the world' [Los Angeles!] than in the hospital. The escapee saves a woman (who refers to herself as Herself) from suicide. Herself becomes the psychiatrist and has the messianic delusion that she understands [his

past experiences] better than any psychoanalyst could. As a skeletal thesis, it is false and inadequate."

It is interesting to look at three Editorials in *Saturday Review* that referred to psychiatry. On the subject "The Reviewer's Function" I found this salty observation: "If the present absorption in *violence and psychiatry* [italics mine] is turning towards a more wholesome attitude towards life he [the critic] will manage to make his opinions known in his reviews. If the majority of sound reviewers are with him he can in some measure be instrumental in changing the course of creative writing." Violence and psychiatry are joined as if they were the same order of things — like detectives and crime, and the "if" becomes a non-if by inference. An Editorial called "The Fifth Freedom" shakes a weary schoolteacher head about "soft-soap excuses" saying, "In our schools this is reflected by the *vanishing hickory stick and the emerging psychiatrist*." (Italics mine.) "The hickory stick has its faults, and the psychiatrist his strengths. But the trend is clear: *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*." While actually talking about the misapplication and misunderstanding of psychiatric contributions to education it leaves the implication that psychiatry is for "soft-soap excuses."

But when the Editors deal with medical judgment that good books are good medicine, the doctor is greeted with open arms. Under the heading "Read Books and Live Longer" (a happy thought, anyway) we are correctly told that "doctors not trained in the 'psychosomatic' concept are as far behind as was the medicine of the ancient tribes!" The Editors, like most physicians and laymen, find it easier to accept psychiatric contributions to organic medicine — ulcers, spasms, headaches, palpitation — than the frightening psychologic facts of aggression, sex, anxiety, fears and "madness." Certainly the number of books dealing with psychiatry attest the wide popular interest in it, but some of them seem to cause high blood pressure in reviewers, and perhaps do not contribute to their longevity.

5.

Straightforward psychiatric books about psychiatric subjects have in each instance been turned over to outstanding professional people for review. These criticisms set a high standard of objectivity and sound reflection. Without exception, in my opinion, they praise what is praiseworthy, attack what is spurious, unsound and biased. The reviewer's own bias is almost always clearly evident in his own words, direct and without apology, for all to see and accept or reject. Freud, psychoanalysis, psychiatry, hostility, rebellion, sex, child raising and self-help books get a fair going over. The most important books get the most space, the unimportant ones the brevity they deserve. Viciousness (as for example Andrew Salter's *The Case Against Psychoanalysis*) is not met with viciousness but with judgment. This is not to say that these critics are above criticism, but only that I was unable to find the same subtle innuendo, nuance and tooth marks on the spines of psychiatric non-fiction that I often did on psychiatric novels and stories. On the whole, however, even these seem to balance out. A book can be an emotional experience. If it does not arouse emotions in a reviewer, his comments would be dull indeed. One presupposes intelligent readers of *Saturday Review*, readers nonetheless complete with their own special sets of biases and prejudices.

Of considerable importance in the publishing world today are the so-called self-help books. Four of these dealing with psychiatry left the reviewer with the uncomfortable conclusion that each of the authors felt that "man is doomed." In their concept," he says, "each of us has an overwhelming unconscious which must be explained to us before we can free ourselves to behave intelligently. There are not, however, sufficient guides for such explaining. Therefore, we shall continue to manufacture neurotics faster than the analysts can prevent us from doing so. There is no escape." A frightening conclusion after reading these self-no-help books. "All the authors agree that a book cannot help a

person to overcome his problems," and the reviewer asks
"Why are they being written?"

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Insight Without Theory

A Phobia In The Sixteenth Century

by

Robert Plank

Though not one of the great lights on the firmament of scientific fame, the Swiss physician Felix Platter (1) (1536-1614) was a leader in the reawakening of medicine that was part of the renaissance. His textbooks were literally reprinted and studied for centuries. His contributions to the field that is now psychiatry were especially appreciated, even though we can not help from our vantage point to be more aware of his limitations (5) (6).

He took care to stress that he attributed many mental diseases to supranatural agents and considered their care the proper province of the clergy (a sign of wisdom in an age of witch hunts and religious persecutions). Where he speculated on physical causes, his findings are (except for the more obvious toxic conditions) without value for us. His therapeutic armamentarium consisted chiefly of bleeding, purging, emetics, baths, diet, castration, trephination, and the complicated and costly compounds which were the fashion then, with little in the way of a rationale for the application of one or the other. His case histories, however, acutely observed and tersely written up, are still fresh:

Hypochondriac melancholia has its name from the locus of its origin — underneath the costal arch. The patients can usually go about their work and are not bedridden, but they constantly have all sorts of complaints, among which upper abdominal pain holds first place. These patients for ever consult their doctor, in fact all doctors. They demand cure and try in vain the most diverse remedies. They keep changing doctors and medications. (4)

The evil spirit is sometime capable of driving a person

1. Latinized Platerus; Zilboorg uses the spelling "Plater"

not only to blasphemous thoughts but also to terrible deeds. There was the shapely wife of a public official who repeatedly asked my help. She labored under the obsession that one night she would have to stab and kill her sleeping husband. The more she tried to control herself, praying to God for relief from this temptation, the more vehemently was she assailed by those thoughts. In tears she confessed to me that I was the first person to whom she dared reveal herself, for fear lest her husband might learn about it, but that she loved him so immeasurably that she would willingly die for him. I consoled her and treated her with much bleeding and purging so that with God's help I was able to cure her. (4)

Recently I had occasion to make a thorough study of a man who labored under the obsession that one night he would have to kill his wife. He also was consoled, and was given electric shock therapy, with great improvement. One might wonder whether, in spite of the enormous difference in conceptualization, the active principles which made treatment effective were not the same in both cases - acceptance which mitigates guilt feeling, and attack against the physical integrity which satisfies need for punishment.

We may not be able to refrain from smiling at the primitive and bizarre elements in Platter's theories. Yet for his time they were advanced, and he made his way. After studying medicine at the University of Montpellier and obtaining his doctor's degree at Basel, he became city physician there, combatted several epidemics with relative success, acquired a practice that included princes, and for some time was dean of the medical school at the University of Basel. His position as a leading intellectual was well established: it was quite natural for instance that when Michel de Montaigne passed through Basel, Platter was one of the two or three people with whom he visited. He was also rich: Montaigne, who had seen some houses, found Platter's "very large, roomy, and sumptuous." (2) It even included a little private zoo (1).

This active, successful, and happy man had a phobia. It does not seem to have hampered him, but he thought it important enough to mention it in his autobiography. The

interesting thing about it is that he treats it in quite a different manner than observations on his cases: He reports it as the direct result of remembered childhood experiences (3):

I was an enemy of all uncleanness and had therefore a horror of many things and was, as the saying is, "cat-clean." This was known about me and I was therefore often teased with it. My sister cut rings from broiled necks and stuck them on her fingers: I was so repelled by this that I could not bear to watch her but had to leave. She ran after me and with these adorned fingers strove to touch me. She put me to flight and chased me hither and yon. She did that often, and I took to such disgust, not only of such rings of flesh, but afterwards of all rings, be they of gold or silver, such as one wears on the fingers, that thereafter I have never worn one and have not been able to touch one with my hand without revulsion. I even acquired a lasting antipathy against anything that is round or perforated, such as whorls. To test me on this, courtiers and others have stealthily enclosed rings in my bread or other food or put some in my cup. Whenever I discovered this, I was terribly put out and could scarcely keep from vomiting.

An enemy of all uncleanness? Platter's autobiography contains but few memories of early childhood. One of the earliest (referring to the age of about four) is this:

I remember the pleasures I had when I got my first pants, and that they were red and that it happened on a Sunday. Father emptied a big basket full of garden cherries on the table, and I ate so many of them that my pleasures were turned into sorrow, and that they had to unbutton me again and to take my pants off and wash them.

A slightly later recollection emphasizes the direction of interest:

Simon Steiner, my cousin, came from Strasbourg to see my father in Basel, of whom I only recall to have seen him as he went from his attic room to the private place. Seems to me he was a short person and wore leather pants. Must also be one of my earliest memories as I can't recall anything else about him.

It is apparent that Platter had not always been "cat-

clean", that his hostility against uncleanness was a reaction formation. This was evidently the first line of defense, not strong enough to contain the enemy. The need for a second defense caused the phobia.

The role of the pursuing finger and the fleshy ring suggests phallic images and castration anxiety. The connection of this motive with that of cleanliness on the other hand indicates that the terrifying association which the finger - ring combination evoked in the boy may not have been genital (memories of anal digital manipulation?). We can hardly go farther without falling into the error of analyzing our associations instead those of our subject; even the fact that he has been dead for three hundred-forty years would not excuse this.

It is clear, in any event, that Platter's phobia had its roots in his childhood. He evidently had no difficulty recognizing that himself. Then why did he not apply the same method to his patients? The obvious answer is that it was not a method which he applied. In the course of writing his autobiography, the connection between the events came to him naturally - as spontaneously as associations come in psychoanalysis; whereas he observed his patients as adults and the thought never struck him to go out of his way to search for their childhood memories. In fact, this thought hardly struck anybody before Freud made his great discoveries.

Furthermore, while with his patients he could not even start on the road toward psychoanalysis, with himself he could take the first step but had to stop halfway. He discovered that his phobia was rooted in childhood but he failed to find, which seems so obvious to us, that it resulted from conflict over infantile sexual strivings. This again was not possible before Freud. Platter remained a forerunner.

The study of his work points up both the similarity of our problems and those of the past, and the gulf that separates us from it: What a competent observer could see three centuries ago is still as valid as it was then; but access to the depths was not granted to him.

Autobiographies have been, then as now, one exception to this. They are a door through which secrets slip out, almost without the author's knowledge and generally without his intent. Therein lies the scientific value of sincere autobiographies as well as their abiding charm.

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A Psychoanalytic Interpretation Of Social Ideology

by

David Drake

Four basic ideological positions have been identified in the modern world: fascist, communist, conservative, and liberal (including social-democratic). Studies such as *The Authoritarian Personality* (1) indicate that general repressiveness and severity of the superego are correlated with belief in the more authoritarian ideologies, which themselves show a consistency of basic features in their various applications (politics, religion, morals, economics, esthetics, etc). This work and others more or less imply that a single dimension is important to the understanding of ideology, and of personality insofar as it is relevant to ideology. Social democracy or liberalism, and ego-strength, are placed at one end of this dimension, fascism and superego-severity at the other, and conservatism presumably in between. The communist ideology is not accounted for. I fully accept the correlation of the more authoritarian ideologies with superego-severity in the personality, i. e. with extreme repressiveness, conformism, punitiveness, hostility, etc. However I feel that two qualitatively different types of severe superego can be identified, one explaining the fascist, the other the communist, authoritarian extreme.

First let me show the naturalness of a two-dimensional treatment of ideology. The basic ideologic correlate of the severe superego is an insistence upon strong controls in society. Social controls however can be of two types, which I shall call "coercing" and "integrating". The first type

1. *The Authoritarian Personality*, Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson, and Sanford. Harper and Bros., New York, 1950.

involves the establishment of various strong, misbehavior-punishing authorities, at the "top" of the social system: the state and its executives; big business leaders; God. So long as the individual complies with the requirements of these authorities in their respective spheres, he is allowed considerable privacy, individuality, and freedom, in the conservative society. Fascism extends these authorities more into the personal life of the individual. The "integrative" type of control would, ideally, dispense with religion, state (e.g., Marx's withering away of the state), and private authority in business. Communist practice of course is somewhere between communist and fascist teaching. Social control would be achieved democratically by the total integration of the individual into the group: by the utter suppression of privacy in property, ideology, and personal pleasures. A democratic but excessively integrated social structure is envisioned, consisting of councils managing not only all political and economic institutions, but also nationally organized entertainment industries, youth groups, schools, and "leisure time" organizations.

What qualitative differences in the severe superego result in the ideologic emphasis of the different types of social control? The looked-for differences are implicit in the most thorough definition of the superego. Many think that this term means only the sum of internalized parental values. Actually the superego as a more or less unified, isolable, and significant component of the personality, is the largely unconscious but symbolized image of the whole person of the parent with authority in the home. This image serves to ward off forbidden impulses in the personality. Furthermore its very existence serves as a reparation for the murderous and destructive impulses the child often feels toward the parent. This latter function has been elucidated particularly by Melanie Klein (2). Since parents are of two types — mothers and fathers — the superego may be of two types. Whereas this will make little difference in the controlling

2. Klein, Melanie, *The Psychoanalysis of Children*

function of the superego (such that communism and fascism are both anti-libertarian and puritanical), it makes quite a difference in the reparational function, for the bodies of the mother and the father differ, and the aggressions against them and reparations for them differ accordingly, both in-intrapsychically and in social symbol.

The male child's (for simplicity of presentation I shall let the reader work out the female child's position in this scheme) fantasy aggression against the mother is rape - a forceful and injuries phallic invasion of her sexually frustrating body. The reparation for this is to restore the wholeness of her body (after it was "broken into"), and to destroy one's own and the father's penes that threaten her. Inasmuch as the mother at one time physically enclosed the child in the womb, and after his birth gave the child his first social relationship or society, nurturing and sustaining his life, any enclosing, sustaining, and particularly social reality tends to become a mother-symbol. Thus the universe, or nature, is a mother symbol on two counts, and human society on three. From this we have an explanation for communist ideology: that it represents a fantasy of the restoration and integration of the mother's body, and of the original mother-child unity. All threatening father- or penis-symbols are destroyed, including God, a father-symbol in relation to the universe, a mother-symbol. This fantasy of reparation for the mother will be extensively influential upon adult thinking when aggression against the mother, and guilt for this, were particularly strong. Such aggression and guilt would result when the mother was a particularly strong disciplinary figure.

The male child's fantasy aggression against his father is to castrate him and rob him of possession of the mother's body. The corresponding reparation is to restore the integrity of the father's penis, and to surrender the mother. Inasmuch as the father possesses an organ, the penis, which is thought by the child to dominate the body of the mother in intercourse, anything in reality which is felt to be a strong and dominating force upon a mother-symbol, is felt to be

a penis- or father-symbol. Thus kings, presidents, generals, big business executives, Popes etc represent penes "above" and controlling the society, the mother's body. Since the male child has given up his struggle for the mother, his father allows - in fact insists upon - his privacy, freedom, and separateness from the social or maternal body. This explains the conservative ideology. In fascism however the child has given up his own autonomy, or penis, to his father, as otherwise he would still be a threat. One should note however that loyalty in a fascist society is not to the laws or social structures, i.e., unity has not been restored with the mother, but the fuerer, duce, or whatever. Furthermore social integration of institutions is less complete under fascism than under communism. In religion, conservatism thinks of God as "immanent and transcendent" to nature, because the father's penis is within the mother when the father is on top of the mother. Reparational fantasies for the father are of significance in adult thinking when the father was an excessively strong disciplinary figure in the home.

Certain aspects of social history are explained by the forgoing theory. The patriarchal 19th century was the era of the conservative society; the increasingly matriarchal (in the home) 20th century is an era of increasing collectivist tendencies. The fascist societies of the 20th century arose in nations with strong patriarchal traditions. Periods of economic distress have increased regression to a dependence on father or mother imagos, and thus popularized authoritarian ideologies. Individuals with upper-class status would tend to identify more with the father than the frustrated child, and so would support fascism and oppose communism, the both derived their large following from the masses.

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The Meaning Of The Cinderella Story In The Development Of A Little Girl

by

Ben Rubenstein

Fairy tales and myths have attracted scientific interest since Freud drew attention to their close relationship to the world of dreams, hysteria, and psychosis. Especially masterful was his analysis of the role of the fairy tale in the neurosis of the "Wolf Man". (1) Many of the early psychoanalytic investigators specifically noted the rich symbolism and the character of wishfulfillment in the fairy tale. We recall that psychoanalysis was under bitter attack at this time and the early defenders turned to fairy tales and myths with the enthusiasms of miners uncovering a rich vein of gold. Their assay of the new raw material through the device of dream analysis uncovered the true nature of the mechanisms of both symbolism and wish in fairy tales.

The universal and perpetual attraction of fairy tales, as with myths and legends, is based upon the ego-syntonic character of the libidinal aspirations. Franz Ricklin (2), in a classical monograph written in 1915, reviewed large groups of fairy tales from various countries and marked their universal psychosexual themes. He drew attention particularly to the wishful character of these themes with respect to the oedipal strivings of children. Ricklin also noted two additional themes in the tales he examined: (1) the almost inevitable presence of the cruel stepmother, and (2) the sexual pursuit of the daughter by the father.

1. Sigmund Freud, "Case of an Obsessional Neurosis", *Collected Works, Volume III*. Hogarth Press.

2. Franz Ricklin, "Wishfulfillment and Fairy Tales", *Nervous and Mental Disease Monographs*. New York: 1915.

Karl Abraham (3) subjected various myths to analysis and described his results. He successfully demonstrated that both myths and dreams expressed wishes that had been subjected to identical mechanisms. In the Prometheus Saga, Abraham traced the influence of the censor, the work of condensation, displacement, and secondary elaboration — all recognizable as elements of dream work. Common to all investigators was agreement upon the major role of sexuality in fairy tales. In essence, sexual symbolism in the tales was found to be identical with dream symbolism.

My own interest in the fairy tale was stimulated by my young daughter's identification with a specific fairy tale heroine. Her intuitive choice of the fairy tale as well as the character selected brought many questions to my mind. Specifically, I was concerned with the appeal of certain fairy tales to children in certain developmental phases, i.e., how children's interest in the stories reflects the relationship to both obvious and disguised wishes and defenses. Through the use of analytic understanding, might not the choice of a fairy tale give some insight into the character of the phallic strivings, sexual rivalry with parents, jealousy of siblings, and sado-masochistic resolution?

One Thanksgiving afternoon, my five-and-a-half year old daughter and her three year old sister visited a family which included an infant son. The five year old entertained the little baby and was quite maternal with him. Upon our return home, she went off into the living room to play. The younger sister, in the meantime, had become quite unreasonable with her mother. As a result, I was forced to take her to her room. It might be normally expected that the older child would derive some pleasure from her sister's predicament. Strangely, the opposite occurred. A sharp scream followed by uncontrollable sobbing was heard. When I entered the room, I found her on the floor. In response to my questions, she would only answer that her knee was hurt. Although it was clear that she was unhurt, she remained unconsolable and, as a result, she, too, joined her younger sister in their room.

3. Karl Abraham, "Dreams and Myths", *Nervous and Mental Disease Monographs*. New York.

By the time dinner was served, they both were again in good spirits. During the meal, the older asked rhetorically if it were fair to send a girl to her room just because she hurt herself. Her mother asked her if she would bring some salt to the table, and as she walked away, she was heard to say as though in continuity, "Why do you treat me like Cinderella?" Almost speechless, her mother managed to ask, "Why do you think I treat you like Cinderella?" She enthusiastically replied, "Because you make me do all the hardest work in the house." After bringing the salt, she gaily threw herself into the spirit of the story. She ran back to the kitchen and bringing with her a toy broom, she began furiously to sweep the rug. The room was swept and she continued a running commentary: "You won't let me go to the ball. You make me iron my sister's dress."

The sister was drawn into the play. Our Cinderella brushed her hair and ironed her dress. The three year old was told how pretty and lucky she was. The busy actress returned to the table for a moment to eat her dinner. She told us that her stepmother was forcing her to eat bones and to drink water. She added, "And now I must lay down on ashes on the hearth." My role — that of the good father who did not like what the mean stepmother did to the daughter — was carefully delineated by her.

She ran back to the little sister and greeted her as though the three year old had returned from the ball. Questions were fired at the bewildered little one: Had she enjoyed the dance? Had the stepmother looked beautiful, etc.? When she tired of this play, the five year old returned to the table, saying to the mother, "And you shouldn't be jealous of me just because I am the most beautiful one in the family."

The timeliness of her use of the Cinderella story led me to re-examine its familiar contents in an effort to determine by analysis of the heroine role why my daughter chose to identify with her. I shall relate the particulars of the Grimm version (4) of the story:

Cinderella is a little girl whose mother dies after telling

4. My daughter was acquainted also with the Lang version in her school. Lang and Perrault are the most popular versions in America. They are widely known through the publicity of their editions by the Disney cartoons. This version contains the familiar theme of the transformation of the pumpkin and mice into the carriage and horses.

the child to be devout and good. The father takes another wife who has two daughters of her own. The "drudge of all work" theme develops in which Cinderella becomes a dirty, tired, little servant girl. Upon leaving on a journey, the father asks Cinderella what gift he can bring her on his return. She modestly tells him to break off the first twig which brushes his hat. The twig, nurtured by her tears, grows on her mother's grave to become her wishing tree. The Prince announces a three day festival to choose his bride. Cinderella is forced to help her stepsisters prepare for the ball. When she asks permission to go, she is given seemingly impossible tasks to perform by the stepmother. Aided by magic, she performs them and attends the ball without discovery. The Prince is attracted to her but each night she eludes him. Once, she hides in the pigeon house which her father demolishes with an axe, while the second evening, she climbs a tree which the father chops down. But on the third evening, Cinderella loses her slipper. (5) During the Prince's attempts to regain his lost love, the two stepsisters try vainly to fit their feet into the slipper; one amputates her toe to do so, the other her heel, with both amputations taking place at the stepmother's suggestion. Deceit is uncovered as Cinderella's birds discover the bloody trail, and virtue triumphs with the Prince taking Cinderella for his own. In final revenge, our heroine's birds pluck out the eyes of her stepsisters.

Let us now try to see what sense our analytic understanding can bring to the tale. The least disguised wish in the Cinderella story is the method of resolution of the sexual rivalry with the mother. The stepmother theme is a common one in a large group of fairy tales. Ricklin describes the meaning of the mother in the role of the stepmother as an overdetermined one. We recognize that the stepmother (the giantess and the witch in other tales) is the sexual rival. The infantile thinking which permits the good mother to die stems not only from the common wish, but in addition, from

5. An additional piece of symbolism was lost to speculation in the translation of the tale from French to English. Cinderella's slipper was not made of glass, it was made of fur. The similarities in the French words "vair" meaning fur, and "verre" meaning glass, caused the error in the translation.

the fact that the good mother no longer exists because she is now a bad figure, a rival. The Cinderella motive then is clear. That the mother must die is beautifully symbolized in the story. The wishing tree which will grant her dearest hope grows on the grave of her mother.

The "drudge of all work" theme is common to many tales and is likewise overdetermined. What are its attributes that make it so strangely agreeable and acceptable to children? Its masochistic character is clear. It would seem that, in part, the identification of children with poor, mistreated, dirty Cinderella portrays the reversal of the sadistic punitive feelings they experience in relationship to the mother and to siblings. We here see a similarity to the paranoid patient who projects his feelings outward and says, "They are mean to me and don't like me." It is the fate of this turning in of aggression upon the self which makes the "drudge of all work" group of fairy tales of particular interest. It is possible further for the heroine and her imitators to assume the above role because teleological and magical thinking are operative. Cinderella accepts her miserable lot because there is no doubt that she will win her prince and that her bad mother and sisters will earn their just due.

In this same connection, one wonders whether, as is true with the compulsion neurotics, the narcissistic gratification arising out of increased feelings of self-esteem from the severe reaction formations does not play an important part? The strong ego-syntonic feelings of righteousness would appear to be a prominent factor in the acceptance of the drudge role.

Another aspect of the Cinderella tale is of interest. It will be recalled that when the father asks her what it is she wishes him to bring her, he is told to break off the first twig which strikes his hat. It is this little twig that grows into a fine tree which grants all of her wishes. Can not the twig be related, at least in part, to the penis envy and phallic aspirations of the little girl? In addition, it is as though the phallic strivings have undergone some transformations since this thought leads directly into another familiar fairy story theme, i.e., the sexual pursuit of the daughter by the

father. Although this second theme is admittedly not as clearly depicted as in many other stories, what other possible explanations can be offered for the strange behavior of the father who goes with an axe to smash the pigeon houses in which he believes Cinderella is hiding? A second night he chops down the pear tree believing that she hides there. In both instances, his motive is to prevent her marriage to the prince. (6) With the magical aid of her birds, Cinderella outwits him. We are so well reminded of Freud's thinking (7) in this connection. He felt that phallic masturbation of little girls foundered in their humiliating recognition of the anatomical distinction between the sexes. A new equation of penis equals child develops and the father becomes the love object with this end in view. Therefore, the twig also becomes the child. (8) The attack of the father is, likewise, reminiscent of "A Child is Being Beaten" where the underlying phantasy was the sexual attack of the father upon the child.

To recapitulate, the Cinderella tale establishes our story book heroine developmentally, ego and libido-wise, in somewhat the following position. She remains firmly fixed in her oedipal strivings since the good mother is dead and her bad mother, the rival, is now a stepmother who persecutes her. With the aid of defensive mechanisms of regression, projection, and magical thinking in order to satisfy super-ego demands, she becomes the poor little servant. Magical and

6. In a recent performance, The Sadlers Wells Ballet Company danced John Cranko's "Shadow" which appeared to depict the strange behavior of a father who alternately offered his daughter to a lover and took her back for himself.

7. Sigmund Freud, *Collected Papers, Volume V*. "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between Sexes", Hogarth Press.

8. It is of interest to find this same equation supported by the symbols found in the other versions of the Cinderella story. The association of pumpkin with pregnancy is well known. In addition, the siblings are alluded to by the mice, which in turn are transformed into phallic horses.

teleological thinking permit her to accept this role since all of her wishes will be granted in the future. In this same fashion, her siblings are sadistically punished. Phallic strivings are somewhat transmuted as the magical phallus now becomes the total girl who will be beaten. Certainly, to be beaten in this sense can mean only to be sexually attacked.

We are now ready to return to the five-and-a-half year old Cinderella. It is important at this point to offer additional information about her general behavior and adjustment prior to the incident. Her behavior in this period immediately preceding the episode could be described as phallic. Blue jeans were the only apparel she would wear and dresses were definitely excluded. She was unkempt, dirty, and happy. She did not hesitate to sadistically punish her little sister. In a period preceding the one described above, I had observed the reverse. Only dresses were worn and she was meticulous. She appeared unable to compete with her younger sister and was quick to dissolve into tears when the younger one barely touched her. She had, in some ways, clearly regressed. Her behavior became infantile. She would speak with longing of her desire to be an infant. We may assume that she was retreating from massive amounts of jealousy. Freud expressed the thought (9) that, after penis envy had abandoned its true object, it continued in the character trait of jealousy. He suggested a transition from the awareness of her poor sexual equipment to the demonstration of jealousy toward the sibling. It is this sequence which prepares the way for the beating phantasy first in respect to her sister and secondly to herself. However, in the middle of the last phallic period, she constantly launched verbal attacks upon her mother, often accusing her of every conceivable and fancied wrong. Several weeks prior to the Cinderella incident, she had become more comfortable and remained so.

I suggest that her play with and the observation of the infant boy stimulated not only the identification and rivalry with the mother described above, but in addition must have

9. Sigmund Freud, *Ibid.*

recalled for her her bitter feelings about her sister's birth. We might conjecture that her observation of the male infant's genitals strengthened her feelings of her own phallic insufficiency while also recalling the superiority of the father's genitals. Freud's well-proven thesis (10) in respect to another consequence of penis envy, i.e., the loosening of the girl's relationship with her mother as a love object, is here operative since the mother is held responsible for the child's lack of a penis.

She returned from her visit with these revived feelings and then had opportunity to overhear my firm, i.e., angry handling of her younger sister. It is my belief that her unconscious constructed a beating phantasy arising sharply out of her castrated feelings. Recall her cry: "My knee, my knee!" (11) It was obviously her wish that I would come and beat (attack) her. I had, many times, been quite impressed by the obviousness of this wish. The subsequent uninvolved treatment she received from her parents forced her feelings to find expression in acting out the masochistic Cinderella phantasy. The mind is a fairy poetess in its own right and accordingly we note the similarity between unconscious productions and fairy tales. Marie Monaparte (12) clearly explains the psychic sequence:

"The active sadistic oedipus must submit to the castration (the knee) with disappointment in the too small clitoris. In this way, the executive organ of sadism becomes depreciated and the big paternal penis (the axe of the story) . . . takes its place as the true representative of sadism The little

10. *Ibid.*

11. My attention was drawn to an article, "A Psychoanalytic Notation on the Root GN, KN, CN", by Henry Alden Bunker and Bertram D. Lewin. (*Psychoanalysis and Culture*, edited by George B. Wilbur and Warner Muensterberger, International Universities Press.) The authors trace the universal meaning of the word "knee" and find it related to the male womb and to root words meaning to beget, to procreate, generate, and genital.

12. Marie Bonaparte, *Female Sexuality*. International Universities Press, Incorporated.

girl desires the father's assaults and blows." (The interpolated material is, of course, my own.)

It is of interest to note the similarity here to the attack with the axe by the father upon the pigeon house and the tree in the Cinderella tale. The beating is a step before penetration. Quoting Bonaparte again:

"It is the clitoris, executive organ of the phallic sadistic infantile sexual aggression, that was turned on the mother, which then becomes, through the subject's own sadism turning upon herself, the phantasied object of the sadistic aggression by the father and his large penis. The clitoris re-becomes, in the little girl's masturbation phantasies which the passive oedipus has attached to the father, an organ of passive sensuality."

As mentioned earlier, my daughter's wish to be beaten and the father's attack on Cinderella with the axe appears similar to the feminine phantasy described by Freud in "A Child is Being Beaten." It is common for us to refer to little girls in the phallic phase as being totally phallic, i.e., the body as phallus. To be beaten is equated in the little girl's unconscious as having her clitoris beaten. Bonaparte suggests this equation may form the connecting link by which the formerly active sadistic clitoridal libido of the girl evolves into full vaginality by passive and masochistic regression.

In conclusion, I feel that the identification with the fairy tale by my little Cinderella was already a portent of the coming latency or the long waiting sleep like that of Sleeping Beauty. Expressed in the identification was the tacit recognition of her minute clitoris with accompanying phantasies of castration and being beaten masochistically by the father.

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Freud and *Hamlet* Again

by

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The controversies about *Hamlet* have a way of repeating themselves generation after generation. But they are worth refighting not only because the play itself seems forever new but because — another tribute to its vitality — discussion of it so often raises exciting collateral issues.

An article by John Ashworth in the *Atlantic*, denouncing the Olivier movie version of *Hamlet*, provides a case in point. The article could be dismissed as no more than a restatement of the view that *Hamlet*'s difficulties in avenging his father are entirely objective — a view given definitive expression more than forty years ago by the German Shakespearean scholar, Karl Werder. But the disciple at least takes cognizance of a view of which his predecessor knew nothing — the Freud-Ernest Jones thesis that *Hamlet*'s delay stems from an internal unconscious conflict experienced, in some degree, by all men in our culture. To call attention to this thesis even in negative fashion is something of a service, for despite the interest it might be expected to have for our psychologically-oriented age it has been conspicuously ignored in contemporary Shakespearean criticism and honored by the general reader more in the breach than in the observance.

Not content with refuting Freud's views of *Hamlet*, the article challenges his right to have any — on the ground that he did not know enough about the cultural history of the Elizabethan age to stand any chance of reading Shakespeare "accurately". Is it really true that one needs a Ph.D. — preferably acquired under Kittredge, who did not have one — to read Shakespeare with comprehension? The very success of the movie version of *Hamlet* casts doubt upon the assumption. Year after year thousands of people with no special literary training read Shakespeare, or re-

spond to revivals of one or another of his plays, with unfeigned enjoyment. Evidently Shakespeare has something to say to us. Most fair-minded critics recognize this. Says L. C. Knights, in his essay on "Shakespeare and Shakespearians" in *Explorations*: "The true Shakespeare critic will be concerned to make himself, as far as possible, a contemporary of Shakespeare's . . . But, more important, he will also be concerned to make Shakespeare a contemporary, to see his particular relevance for our time." Intruders from such fields as psychoanalysis aside, most of the creative critics of today are primarily concerned with the second of these objectives, the search for the enduring values of literature, those least subject to the decaying influence of time. In strict logic we would have to repudiate almost the entire body of work loosely lumped together as "the new criticism" if we decided that the task of criticism is simply to reconstruct the meaning works of art had for their own age and denied psychoanalytic interpretations a hearing.

2.

The nub of Ashworth's argument is that Freud is foolish to explain Hamlet's delay in killing Claudius, for there is no delay. Hamlet must first obtain airtight proof that Claudius has really murdered the previous King, Hamlet's father. Once Hamlet has secured this proof, through the play within a play, he proceeds expeditiously about his business. Only external obstacles and the fear of losing his own life keep him from killing Claudius sooner than he does.

According to this interpretation, Hamlet cannot accept the word of the Ghost about Claudius' guilt because — though like nearly all Elizabethans he believed in ghosts — he also shared the prevalent notion that demons can masquerade as ghosts. Now it may be that Shakespeare also believed in ghosts, but what seems quite certain is that he didn't believe in them in simple-minded fashion. In Act I the Ghost is seen by Horatio, Marcellus, Bernardo and Hamlet, but speaks only to his son. When he reappears in the Queen's closet, he is seen and heard by Hamlet but not

by the Queen. These facts at least suggest the possibility that the Ghost has some relation to the psychic state of those to whom he appears — that he may be a projection of their unconscious suspicions and fears. He would be seen by the watch and Horatio because they felt vaguely troubled about conditions in their land. "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark". But his message, as Horatio predicted, was for Hamlet's ears alone. So when he appears *in his night-gown* ("Shakespeare's stage directions are explicit, if brief") in the Queen's closet he is seen only by Hamlet because, as Hamlet knows, he has come to rebuke him:

Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, laps'd in time and passion, lets go by
Th' important acting of your dread command?

(Act III, Scene 4, lines 106-08)*

The fear that the Ghost may be a demon fits in with the theory that he is a projection of the mental state of those who see him. It is natural that Horatio, Marcellus and Hamlet would be apprehensive about the revelation they feel the Ghost has for them. One of the important things psychoanalysis has taught us is that we spend a great deal of psychic energy in the endeavor not to see certain things. But this initial doubt is overcome. Despite his own fears and the warnings of Marcellus and Horatio, Hamlet follows the Ghost and hears him. What he hears confirms suspicions he tells us he has already held.

O my prophetic soul!
My uncle? (I, 5, 40-41)

After this speech it does not matter whether we regard the Ghost as "subjective" or "objective". Either way Hamlet is now consciously aware of his uncle's guilt. And he assumes the burden of avenging his father:

And thy commandment all alone shall live
Within the book and volume of my brain,
Unmix'd with baser matter. (I, 5, 102-104)

*All references are to the Kittredge edition of Shakespeare (Ginn and Co., Boston, 1936).

3.

Neither these lines nor the entire speech in which they occur suggest that Hamlet has the slightest doubt about the authenticity of the Ghost or his own clear duty to avenge him. Later, to be sure, Hamlet conceives the idea of *confirming* (not really deciding) his uncle's guilt* by the play within the play, *but the need for additional proof, for absolute certainty is itself part of Hamlet's neurotic hesitancy* in connection with this particular action. One does not have to understand the intricacies of psychoanalysis to know about rationalization — to be aware that the reasons we give for our actions do not always reveal our real motives.

If Hamlet does not delay, what is the basis for the self-reproach which is so continuous and conspicuous a feature of the play? How can one account for the famous monologue in Act II, Scene 2 — before the play within a play:

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba
That he should weep for her? What would he do
Had he the motive and the cue for passion
That I have?

. . . It cannot be
But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall
To make oppression bitter, or ere this
I should have fatted all the region kites,
With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!

O, vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,

* I'll observe his looks
I'll tent him to the quick. If he but blench,
I know my course. (II, 2, 624-6)

If his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen . . . (III, 2, 85-7)

Italics mine. The assumption behind both speeches is that his uncle is guilty, that only a small amount of additional evidence is needed, and that it will undoubtedly be forthcoming.

That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must (like a whore) unpack my heart with words
And fall a-cursing like a very drab . . .

Assuming, however, that Hamlet's need for further proof is justified, not just an excuse for further delay, *why doesn't he proceed with his task when he has the proof* — when the "frighted" King starts up before the end of the play, revealing his guilt to the assembled court? Or, if there were any conceivable reason for letting such an opportunity slip by, why doesn't he kill the King later, perhaps waiting until he finishes his prayers, then setting upon him?

I deliberately omit the possibility that he might have killed the King while he was praying, because Werder and his followers think that Hamlet's inaction on this occasion can be explained by the convention that the soul of one killed at prayer would go to Heaven. But here again, I would maintain, Hamlet is simply taking advantage of the convention to justify his inability to act. If conditions had been reversed, would Claudius have hesitated to kill Hamlet? We do not have to speculate about the matter; the answer is in the play. In Act IV, Scene 7, the King is testing Laertes to make sure he can still use him to get rid of Hamlet:

What would you undertake
To show yourself your father's son in deed
More than in words?

Laertes replies:

To cut his throat i' th' church.

And the King answers:

No place indeed should murder sanctuarize;
Revenge should have no bounds.

But Hamlet is also deterred, it is argued, by the fear of death. "Even if he succeeded (in killing the King before being stopped), he would immediately lose his own life. Does that matter?"

Now the question is certainly a spurious one; as we shall later see, there is every reason to believe that Hamlet could

have won the populace to his side and avenged his father without being killed. But granting the legitimacy of the question for the moment, the answer to it assuredly is "No."

O that this too too solid flesh would melt
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!

(I, 2, 129-134)

And later when the hated windbag, Polonius, asks to humbly take his leave, Hamlet replies: "You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal — except my life, except my life, except my life." Nothing seems more clear than Hamlet's *desire* for death as a way out of the insuluble conflict in which he finds himself. And by proceeding in such a way as to arouse the King's suspicions he brings about his own death, as certainly as if he had committed suicide.

"The Elizabethan," Ashworth writes, "was accustomed to seeing royalty well 'attended' both in life and in plays." Perhaps so: but what matters is not the actuarial probabilities, what usually obtained, in life or in literature, but the actual situation in this particular play, *Hamlet*. In *Hamlet*, Claudius is not always well attended. Hamlet chances upon him while he is alone at prayer. In Act IV, Scene 1, Claudius and the Queen are able to confer privately simply by dismissing Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. There are no attendants about. The evidence of the play suggests that the Castle at Elsinore was much less densely populated than Ashworth makes out; Hamlet could walk "four hours together" in its lobby, presumably without company or interruption. The assumption that the King was always well attended seems to me a clear-cut example of the harm the possession of historical knowledge can lead to when it is used as anything more than a guide and not complemented by a careful study of a text.

But one does not have to study *Hamlet* to perceive that

its hero never acts like a man concerned about the objective difficulty of his assignment. He is troubled first and last by the mysterious force within him which keeps him from executing it.

I do not know

Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do,'

Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means

To do't.

(IV, 4, 43-46)

Hamlet was not a man to be easily deterred from his purpose by external obstacles. The deftness with which he handles the plot against his life, sending Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to the death intended for him, would alone teach us this, but the fact is that Hamlet shows skill and decision in *everything except the execution of the task laid on him by his father's ghost*.

This, by the bye, is the Freud-Jones thesis. Freud wrote, in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, "Hamlet is able to do anything but take vengeance upon the man who did away with his father and has taken his father's place with his mother — the man who shows him in realization the repressed desires of his own childhood. He is inhibited in accomplishing this by conscientious scruples, which tell him that he himself is no better than the murderer whom he is required to punish." At time Ashworth seems aware that this is the Freud-Jones position, but at other times he lumps them with Goethe and other critics who have seen Hamlet as a neurasthenic intellectual, whose will is paralyzed by excessive thought. The least one can say is that this is unscholarly: brief as Freud's discussion of the play is, he finds space specifically to disavow the Goethe viewpoint. Jones marshals the extensive evidence for Hamlet's general decisiveness and quotes with approval the famous Bradley dictum that Hamlet was "a man who at any *other* time and in any *other* circumstances than those presented would have been perfectly equal to his task . . ."

Hamlet's general capacity for action and his own attitude toward his mission should be sufficient to dispose of

the argument that he is held back by external difficulties. But it is refuted by an important secondary strand of the plot as well. In the belief that Claudius has killed Polonius, Laertes easily recruits a mob of followers ready to proclaim him king, and overcoming the King's Switzers, breaks into the Palace. How much more easily might not Hamlet have done the same thing — the Prince who has a legitimate claim to the throne and is so beloved by the public that the King dared not denounce him for having killed Polonius. As Ernest Jones writes, “. . . the whole Laertes episode seems almost deliberately to have been woven into the drama so as to show the world how a pious son should really deal with his father's murderer, how possible was the vengeance in just these particular circumstances, and by contrast to illuminate the ignoble vacillation of Hamlet whose honour had been doubly wounded by the same treacherous villain.”

But, says Ashworth finally, Hamlet does try to kill the King twice. Hearing someone behind the arras, he immediately sticks his sword into him. “There's Freud's ‘hesitation’ for you. Hamlet *thinks* the ‘eavesdropper’ whom he does kill without any hesitation whatever is the King. How can such an incredible blind spot in Freud be explained?” Now in the first place precisely the point to be noted is that Hamlet here acts impulsively and precipitately; as Freud says — Freud who, remember, is well aware that in general Hamlet is *not* hesitant — he acts “in a sudden outburst of rage.” Even the law distinguishes between such an act and one done in cold blood. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Hamlet thinks the eavesdropper behind the arras is Claudius. *After* the murder, perhaps already penitent for having killed an unknown man, he asks “Is it the King”? But immediately before the deed he has seen the King in another room, kneeling at prayer. Furthermore, before he strikes, he hears the unseen man behind the arras cry for help. Did he cry with the King's voice?

Of course, Hamlet finally kills Claudius. But it could be argued that *he never avenges his father's death*. He kills Claudius in the despair and bitter anger that follows his

mother's poisoning and Laertes' disclosure that he, Hamlet, will die of his "envenom'd" wound — and that "The King, the King's to blame." Now whether Hamlet kills Claudius to avenge his father, or to avenge his mother and himself, what is indisputable is that he kills him at the last possible minute. Those who maintain that he needed the confirmatory evidence of the play within the play tend to forget that this is obtained in Act III, Scene 2. Hamlet's hesitation continues long enough thereafter to be responsible, directly or indirectly, for the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Polonius, Ophelia and Laertes, the Queen, and Hamlet himself.

It is this hesitation, which is the central problem of *Hamlet*, that Freud and Jones have explained. The explanation does not "account" for the greatness of Shakespeare's play. Jones specifically disavows any intention of dealing with the play's poetic and literary qualities. However, at the very least, he and Freud have performed a negative service to literature of no small value. For if there were no satisfactory explanation of Hamlet's delay — if we felt that his inaction made no sense and was dramatically "wrong" — we would have to conclude that *Hamlet* is not a great play; and in fact T. S. Eliot, who sees Hamlet "dominated by an emotion which is . . . in excess of the facts as they appear," and is unwilling or unable to allow for the unconscious source of the emotion, regards *Hamlet* as an artistic failure.

But most people do not; and the Freud-Jones interpretation provides at least one important clue to the almost universal appeal of the play, for it explains Hamlet's delay in terms of a conflict of intense moment to everyone. The Werder interpretation, in contrast, would not even permit *Hamlet* to qualify as a good fairy story. No great emotional interest could be expected to attach to a story of a cautious hero who spends half his time verifying his mission and then proceeds to execute it in bungling fashion.

4.

As one would expect, most of the efforts of psychoanalytic critics of *Hamlet* have been devoted to elucidating the psychology of the characters, and in particular, the unconscious sources of emotion when these can be inferred. Admittedly Freud and Jones have not done full justice to the play's esthetic aspects or its religious, cultural and moral values. These values are brilliantly dealt with by Francis Fergusson in his essay on *Hamlet* in *Idea of the Theatre*. But Fergusson errs, it seems to me, in maintaining that "The main action of Hamlet may be described as the attempt to find and destroy the hidden 'imposthume' which is poisoning the life of Claudius' Denmark." Is it not because Hamlet is sick at heart that he searches, almost greedily, for evidence of disorder in that macrocosm, the world? He does not, of course, fail to find it: it is always there. But the play's political happenings and allusions are intended to heighten and echo the personal tragedy.

Space does not permit me to document this conclusion, which to some extent, in any case, rests on one's entire reading of the play. But a belief which Ashworth mentions in the course of his article should be discussed if only because so many share it; this is the belief that in its treatment of social issues psychoanalysis is fundamentally and necessarily conservative. Analysis has shown that certain people are radical as a result of unconscious conflicts. In dealing with individual neurosis it tentatively assumes the "normality" (the quotes are Freud's) of the environment. Thus, many conclude, psychoanalysis tends to align itself with the defense of the *status quo*.

The difficulty of combatting this belief is compounded by the fact that there are good grounds for regarding Freud as a conservative. As we see in particular from *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he was dubious of all panaceas, including communism. Most reforms, he appears to have believed, would create some new difficulty for every old one they eliminated. Or they would simply shift the conflicts which make life burdensome to new arenas. If people do not

struggle about private property, they will struggle about "prerogatives in sexual relationships," power and other things. Like Shakespeare, Freud was a pessimist, with a tragic sense of human destiny. He saw the extent to which man's difficulties arise out of his own instinctual drives, which can be modified but not fundamentally changed by altering social conditions. Above all, he knew that "there are certain difficulties inherent in the very nature of culture which will not yield to any efforts at reform." Any society must seek to curb man's aggressive and sexual impulses, and such curbs cannot fail to produce difficulties, tension and unhappiness.

However, neither Freud's pessimism nor his conservatism should be exaggerated. If he saw the limits beyond which reforms could not hope to be effective, within those limits he favored doing everything possible. Opposed to communism because of its extravagant claims, he was willing to concede the enormous benefits which would flow from "an actual change in men's attitude to property." Aware of the need for controlling man's sexual impulses, he was sharply critical of the extreme restrictions which have been imposed by Western European civilization. In a 1925 paper which is too little known ("The Resistances to Psychoanalysis," *Collected Papers*, Vol. V) he speaks out with the zeal of a reformer against the unnecessary severity with which the instincts generally are curbed in our culture:

. . . On the whole . . . (the individual) is obliged to live psychologically beyond his income, while the unsatisfied claims of his instincts make him feel the demands of civilization as a constant pressure upon him. Thus society maintains a condition of cultural hypocrisy, which is bound to be accompanied by a sense of insecurity and a necessity for guarding what is an undeniably precarious situation by forbidding criticism and discussion. This line of thought holds good for all the instinctual impulses, including, therefore the egoistic ones . . .

Psychoanalysis has revealed the weaknesses of this system and has recommended that it should be altered. It proposes that there should be a reduction in the strictness with which instincts are repressed and that correspondingly more

play should be given to truthfulness. Certain instinctual impulses, with whose suppression society has gone too far, should be permitted a greater amount of satisfaction; in the case of certain others the inefficient method of suppressing them by means of repression should be replaced by a better and securer procedure . . .

Comment by analysts linking revolutionary propensities to infantile conflicts seems to be one important source of the impression that psychoanalysis harbors a conservative bias. In particular the *apercu*, "The origin of all revolutions is the revolution in the family," has become well known. But if there is any bias in this remark, it is one in behalf of the formative influence of infantile experiences. Psychoanalysis not only believes but has empirically verified the fact that patterns of later attitudes are laid down in childhood. But of course this applies, as every analyst recognizes, to patterns of submission, conformity and conservatism as much as to patterns of revolt.

Common observation reveals how frequently an emotional inclination to believe one thing rather than another warps our judgment. But no analyst would be naive enough to believe that it *necessarily* has this effect. If it did, the human situation would be hopeless indeed, for there are few subjects of any importance which we can approach with complete objectivity. When we feel that a person's unrecognized emotional needs have determined his ideological position, we are fully justified in holding it suspect. But we are not justified at all in assuming that it is mistaken. The only test of the rightness or wrongness of a belief — one in practice of course not always easy to apply — is the way it corresponds to external conditions, to what psychoanalysis calls the reality principle. Though in general our objective judgments are the more reliable, an opinion to which we are inclined by our personality may be correct and one which reflects no bias may be mistaken. Indeed, a person may originally adopt a certain position, such as radicalism, in response to neurotic needs, free himself from his neurosis, and maintain the same position because his

more objective appraisal of the facts confirms its correctness. This is in part the theme of a much misunderstood modern novel, Koestler's *Arrival and Departure*.

The worth of an individual or the value of his achievements cannot be decided, any more than the correctness of his opinions, on the basis of genetic considerations. Freud's various biographical studies show that he fully recognized this. They reveal too that his yardstick for measuring people was a liberal and enlightened one. He tracked down Leonardo's passion for investigating nature to its source in an unusually intense infantile sexual curiosity, but this did not lessen his admiration for him as the first modern natural philosopher and a man who achieved a great measure of religious emancipation in an age when that was not easy. In contrast, Freud is scornful of Dostoevsky's submission to temporal and spiritual authority, his narrow nationalism and grovelling before God — a position, Freud says bitterly, "which lesser minds have reached with smaller effort." Freud saw that Dostoevsky was probably condemned to these views by his neurosis, but neither this realization nor Freud's admiration for Dostoevsky as a writer softens his indictment of the Russian's orthodoxy. "Dostoevsky threw away the chance of becoming a teacher and liberator of humanity and made himself one with their gaolers."

As a system of therapy, psychoanalysis seeks to help people see the world without distortion. To see it as it is is not necessarily calculated to make one like it as it is. Nor does the goal of "adjustment" (which in any case is far less emphasized in analysis than in other forms of psychotherapy) imply either uncritical acceptance of existing social arrangements or submissiveness before their demands. There are, fortunately, many worlds within the large world — many different patterns of life and many different ways of expressing dissent. Every reputable analyst seeks to *minimize* the coerciveness of reality — to help each of his patients find the kind of occupational, sexual and general life adjustment which is congenial to his personality and likely to develop his powers. The most undeviating nonconformity would

probably not be discouraged where a person was willing to face the consequences. Only if one's radicalism were neurotically grounded — in which case it would crumble under any severe test — would it be likely to be disturbed by psychoanalysis. Since analysis releases energy which has previously been wasted in internal conflicts, its usual result is to make those it helps more effective fighters for the kind of world in which they believe.

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